DORNIER Do 217

A COMBAT AND PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORD IN LUFTWAFFE SERVICE 1941-1945

CHRIS GOSS

The Dornier Do 217 represented the refinement of German twin-engined bomber design and a progression of the earlier Do 17, the so-called 'Flying Pencil'. From 1941, the Do 217 became the mainstay of the Luftwaffe's bomber arm in the West, equipping just four Gruppen for operations over Britain. It carried out day and night attacks on British shipping, coastal targets, towns and industrial centres, both in formation and in lone attacks known to the German crews as 'Pirate' operations. These missions, though achieving some success, were undertaken at considerable cost to the crews of the Do 217s. This was not, necessarily, a reflection of the aircraft itself, which for a machine of its size and weight, was remarkably manoeuvrable, but rather a measure of the strength of opposition it encountered in the RAF's nightfighter squadrons, improved radar and anti-aircraft defences.

But the Do 217 proved itself remarkable in the flexibility of its airframe and it underwent several changes in both its design and its tactical deployment. As the demand from Germany's battlefronts grew from early 1942, so the Do 217, albeit in very limited numbers, was developed into a radar-equipped nightfighter. The aircraft also underwent a redesign of its cockpit to introduce vision and crew accommodation improvements, and in the Mediterranean it was used as an effective maritime strike aircraft, launching highly developed stand-off bombs and remotely-controlled glide-bomb weapons in the form of the 'Fritz X' and Hs 293 which accounted for the destruction or damage of several notable warships.

It was also used as a night reconnaissance aircraft on the Eastern Front while its use as a bomber over Britain continued into the Luftwaffe's 1942 'Baedeker Blitz' and the 1944 'Steinbock' bombing campaigns though by the latter, the Do 217 had all but been replaced by newer bombers.

Following extensive research, including interviews and correspondence with former aircrew and their families, renowned Luftwaffe historian, Chris Goss, has documented the operational history of the Do 217 and offers the most comprehensive account so far published in the English language. The story is complemented by hundreds of rare photographs, many never before published, as well as specially commissioned colour artwork.

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Chris Goss

THE AUTHOR

Born in South Wales in 1961, Chris Goss became interested in aviation history from an early age and as a teenager began to actively research World War Two aircraft crashes, contacting both German and RAF aircrew. After a successful career in the RAF, retiring early with the rank of Wing Commander, in 2014 he began to write about and research aviation history full time. This is his sixth title for Classic Publications, a roster which includes books on the combat histories of the Focke-Wulf Fw 200 and Dornier Do 17.

He is a regular and highly sought-after contributor to major aviation and historical publications in the UK, France and Germany including *Flypast, Britain at War, Air Mail, Aviation News, Fan D'Aviation* and *Aerojournal*. He is the author of forty-two critically acclaimed books covering aspects of the air war over north-west Europe 1939-1945 and has edited, revised and co-authored a further four books. His work has been published in France, Germany, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Spain, Sweden and the USA. He has acted as a historical consultant for a number of major projects or events including the recovery of the Dornier 17 by the RAF Museum, the Royal Air Forces Association and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and has contributed to a number of TV programmes. Chris completed an MA with Merit in War Studies (Kings College London) in 2001.

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Chris Goss

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INTRODUCTION

A Luftwaffe pilot who had flown the Do 17 in 1940-41 wrote of flying on operations having just converted to the Do 217 in early 1942:

> 'The conditions under which we had to operate were drastically different and nobody had any experience of them. We had to learn how to approach the targets in the safest manner and also to return. In this situation we urgently needed advice from our ground radar guidance officers and our nightfighters. They could have told us what gave them the greatest difficulty in attacking enemy bombers, but nothing of the kind happened. We had to learn it all ourselves by trial and error and the learning process was very costly.'

For the remainder of 1942, the Do 217 was used to continue the aerial assault against Britain. At the same time over Germany, the intensifying RAF bomber offensive resulted in the Do 217, an aircraft designed solely as a bomber, being used as a stopgap night-fighter. By 1943, the Do 217 was then forced to become the launch platform for guided bombs due to the intended aircraft, the He 177, not being operationally ready. Meanwhile over the Soviet Union, the Do 217 was being used only for nocturnal reconnaissance. However, 1943 would see the Do 217's star starting to fade as newer more capable aircraft at last became available.

Despite this, in 1944 the Do 217 was still being used in the bombing, anti-shipping, nightfighter and night reconnaissance roles, albeit in much fewer numbers, as in October 1943 production of the aircraft had ceased. By now, the ability to carry out an effective bombing campaign was getting harder, much harder than what had been experienced in 1942, as one Do 217 pilot stated in May 1944:

> 'Continued Allied interference with transfer flights between bases and practice flights over occupied territory has resulted in permission being given to crews of KG 2 to count certain of these flights as operational sorties for the purpose of qualifying for the award of a war flights badge. As an indication of the scale of this interference, it may be quoted that *Hptm* Kunze, *Staffelkapitän* of 3./KG 2, has been shot down on no fewer than three occasions during the present year while on transfer flight between bases.'

Having spoken with Robert Forsyth and Bernd Rauchbach, all three of us were somewhat astounded that having finished the manuscript, what became evident was the slaughter experienced by Do 217 crews over Great Britain. It is easy for a fighter pilot to gauge success by the number of aircraft shot down, but how could the Do 217 crews gauge success? There are few examples in this book of spectacular attacks on major targets which resulted in a reduction of Britain's industrial and military capabilities. Would an attack on a train which resulted in the deaths of women and children be regarded as a military success? I doubt it. Many nights Do 217 crews headed towards British targets, some aircraft being shot down by nightfighters and flak and others suffering accidents on their return. What did crews really think having seen friends shot down or killed and then having to carry out similar attacks on subsequent nights and how could they keep doing this? Was it simply a case of duty or was it a form of revenge? There were successes by KG 100 in the Mediterranean with the Hs 293 and *Fritz* X guided weapons, but there the Do 217 was being used as a stopgap launch aircraft because the operational debut of the He 177 was well behind schedule and again, this was a clear case of too little too late. Finally, for much of its operational career, the Do 217 was used against British targets, so why was it not used as a bomber on the Eastern Front?

In the space of four years, the Luftwaffe had gone from the offensive to the defensive and for three of these years, the Do 217, replacement of the Do 17 – the so-called 'Flying Pencil' – was in constant action. However, its effective operational shelf life was from July 1941 to September 1944 and as a result of this and the losses its crews suffered, little has been written about this bomber and few photographs still exist, unlike the mass of photographs of the Do 17 and other bombers taken earlier in the war. Having been fascinated by the Do 17, I was equally interested in the Do 217 especially as no examples of the latter exist. Rather than a story of design and development, this book is therefore a record of the operational experiences of the Do 217 and a tribute to its crews, many of which had a limited chance of survival over the Normandy Beaches in June-August 1944 (on 14 August 1944 the Luftwaffe admitted that *Luftflotte* 3 had lost 175 bombers between 6 and 30 June 1944 and a further 159 in July 1944, albeit that was not the final figure). This would be the final curtain call for this aircraft. The reader might, having read this book, come to the conclusion that the story of the Do 217 is one of loss after loss after loss. The sobering truth is just that and goes to show how the Luftwaffe's bomber arm was all but bled dry by the summer of 1944.

Chris Goss
Marlow, 2022

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This book was a logical next step from my interest in the Do 17. Yet again I would like to thank the continued help and support from my great friend Bernd Rauchbach. I would also like to thank Matti Salonen in Finland for his patience with my continued questions, many of them vague and most of which he could (willingly?) answer. I have had great help from Barbara, George and John Wolff (Canada and USA) and my correspondence with their late mother Rosemarie, many years ago, I have never forgotten.

Finally, I must thank Günther Steudel (Canada) and the Steudel family. Their help with photographs and information from their father Josef has been a great help and inspiration to me. This book is therefore dedicated to the memory of *Oblt* Hans Wolff and *Hptm* Josef Steudel.

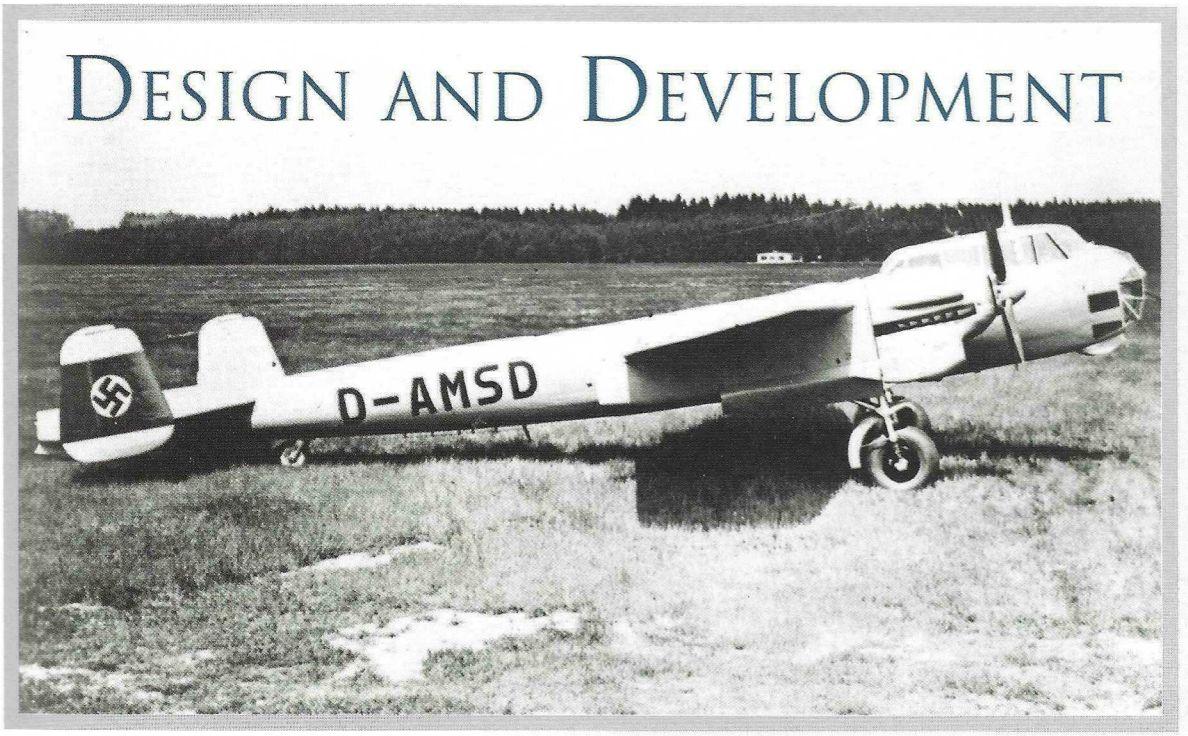
In no particular order, I would also like to thank: Tim Oliver (UK), Andy Saunders (UK), the late Steve Hall (UK), Eddie Creek (UK), the late Dr Alfred Price (UK), Robert Forsyth (UK), Mark Nelson (Australia), Gianandrea Bussi (Italy), Gerhard Stemmer (Germany), Mikael Olrog (Sweden), Sven Carlson (Germany), Dr Theo Boiten (Holland), Peter Taghon (Belgium), Brian Bines (UK), Jeremy Green (USA), Del Davis (USA), Andy Thomas (UK), Kurt Braatz (Germany), Wojtek Matusiak (Poland), Steven Coates (UK), Phil Irwin (UK) and Nick Beale (UK).

Again, I have been doing this research for over 40 years and I would like to also thank those many who supplied accounts of what happened to them, and who are no longer with us.

Chris Goss

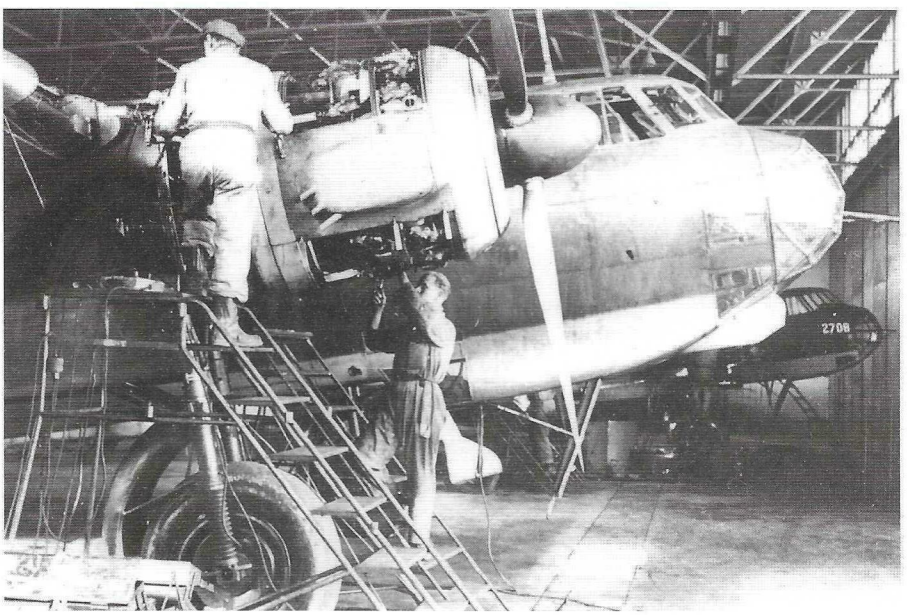
CHAPTER ONE

DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT



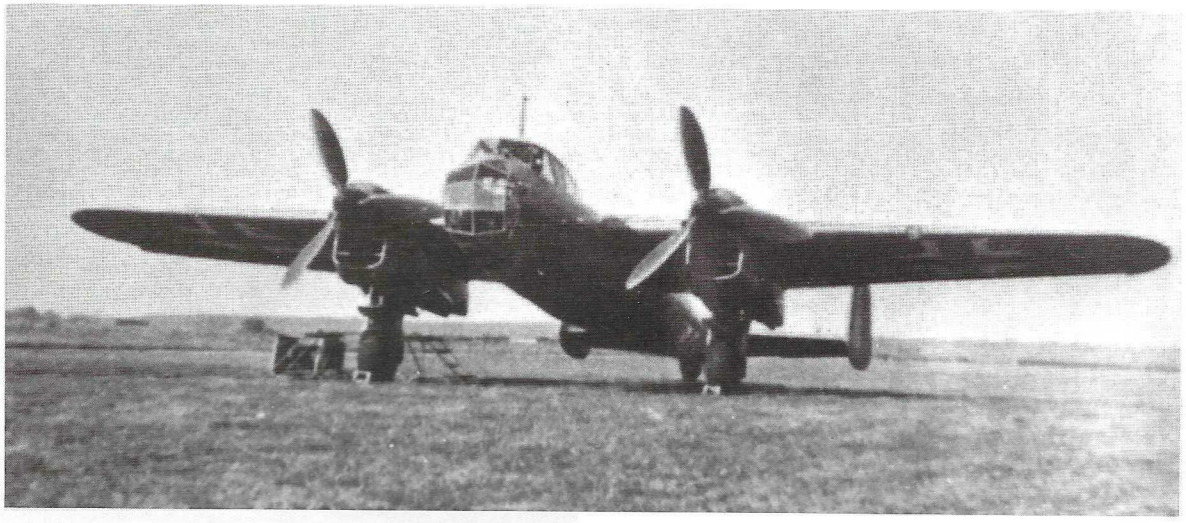
Do 217 V4, W.Nr. 690, the fourth prototype seen here coded D-AMSD at Friedrichshafen. It was also allotted the code CN+HL and was powered by Jumo 211 A-1 and then Jumo 211 B-1 engines. It is fitted with an MG 15 machine gun in the nose.

A successor to the Do 17 – known as the 'Flying Pencil' – was first raised by the Luftwaffe at the end of September 1938. Full production of the superior Junkers Ju 88 had yet to be achieved while much effort was now going into the Heinkel He 177 programme. This latter aircraft would be plagued by political and military interference as well as considerable technical problems, all of which would play into the hands of the Dornier Flugzeugwerke. For example, the decision for the He 177 to be a dive-bomber meant that the fuselage had to be strengthened. Then there was a lack of a powerful engine capable of giving the He 177 the range, speed and altitude, made harder by the requirement for it to have two paired engines on each wing linked to a single airscrew. These paired engines ran hot and an attempt to solve this and to reduce drag by not having radiators resulted in a revolutionary evaporative cooling system which was found to be insufficient, so radiators had to be fitted which then increased drag, which required more power from the engines – a vicious circle from the start. On the first flight, the engines were noted to be overheating which, together with a myriad of other problems that included the crash of a number of prototypes, meant that it was not until early 1941 that the first production aircraft, the He 177 A, began flight-testing. Thus an aircraft whose maiden flight was in November 1939 did not become fully operational until November 1943. It was clear that there had to be an interim solution – and quickly.

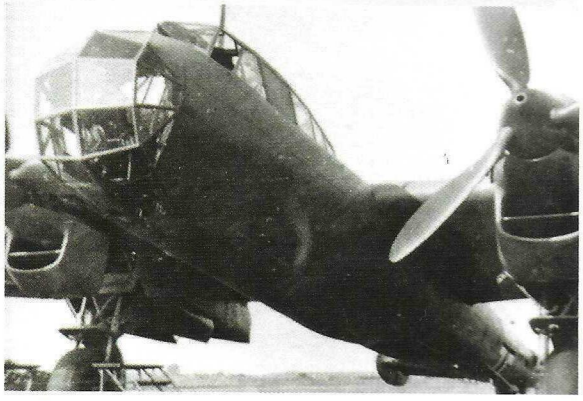


Dornier engineers working on a Do 217 E-2. The closest aircraft has the last two digits of the Werknummer 52 on the nose which could indicate that this was W.Nr. 1152. This aircraft was damaged in an accident at Amsterdam-Schiphol while being flown by II./KG 2. In the background is Do 217 V8, W.Nr. 2708, CO+JL, which first flew on 21 March 1940 and was the test aircraft for the BMW 801 engines and was the first Do 217 E-1.

At the beginning of 1938, Specification 1323 was submitted by Dornier to the RLM for a twin-engined bomber capable of long-range reconnaissance missions and powered by Daimler Benz DB 601 B engines. Dornier proposed a wider cockpit and a larger bomb bay capable of carrying 1,500 kg of bombs and, compared to the Do 17 M, the wingspan was increased by a metre and the aircraft fitted with dive brakes. At the same time, the Luftwaffe came up with the requirement for this aircraft to be used in the maritime attack role as well as being able to be used as a heavy fighter and for reconnaissance. The specification therefore had the aircraft fitted with floats, having a range of 1,500 km and a solid nose with four fixed guns. However, arguments between the



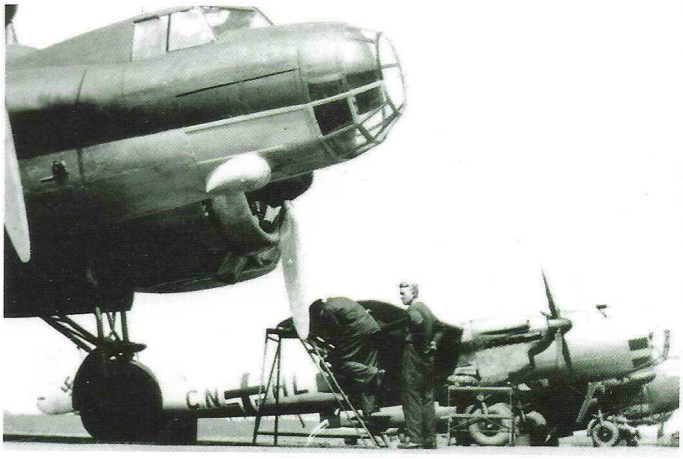
The Do 217 A-0, of which just six were produced, was fitted with cameras and assigned to 1./Aufklärungsgruppe Oberbefehlshaber der Luftwaffe from January 1940 for clandestine missions. They were powered by DB 601 engines and carried a crew of three. They were soon assigned to transport or training roles with other units. This aircraft is believed to be coloured pale grey and carries the T5 code on the fuselage.



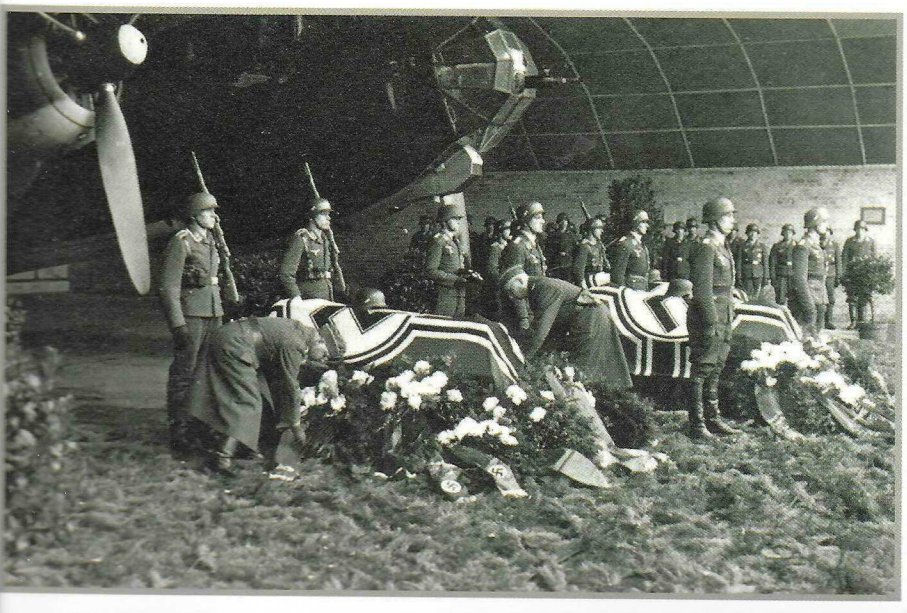
Luftwaffe and Kriegsmarine as to aircraft being land-based or not, and the emergence of other aircraft such as the Blohm und Voss Ha 140 and Heinkel He 115 types, meant that development of a naval version, the so-called '*See Stuka*', was cancelled in January 1939 and the development of a more conventional aircraft continued.

On 4 October 1938, Do 217 V1, W.Nr. 687, the first prototype powered by DB 601 A engines, made its first flight only for it to crash on 11 October 1938 at Tettnang, north-east of the Dornier headquarters at Friedrichshafen in southern Germany, killing test pilot *Dipl.Ing* Rolf Köppe and flight engineer Egon Bausenhart. Undeterred, the first development aircraft, Do 217 V2, W.Nr. 688, which was the same as the V1 but fitted with a tail dive brake, was ready to fly just under a month after that and between October 1938 and July 1940, ten prototypes flew which differed in the designed role (reconnaissance and bomber) and power plants, the final engines being the BMW 801 from Do 217 V8 onwards.

At the same time, several other variants were being considered. Six Do 217 A-0s (W.Nr. 2701 to 2706) were produced, fitted with two *Reihenbildner* Rb 50/30 cameras in the cockpit and a Rb 20/30 camera in the fuselage. This variant was powered initially by DB 601 A or B engines and had a crew of three. These aircraft were assigned to *Oberst* Theodor Rowehl's clandestine 1./*Aufklärungsgruppe Oberbefehlshaber der Luftwaffe* for long-range reconnaissance missions at the start of January 1940, but their time in service was short, being subsequently assigned to such units as 10./KG 2 and IV./KG 40 for training aircrew. The last recorded mention of a Do 217 A-0 being lost in an accident was W.Nr. 2703 which crashed near Osnabrück on 30 March 1942 flying with 10./KG 2 and killing *Lt.* Gerold Buss and two crew. A further Do 217 A-0 W.Nr. 2706 survived to serve with



Another view of Do 217 V4. Behind it appears to be a dark-painted Do 217 E-1 or E-2 while in the foreground is the nose of either the Do 17 V20, W.Nr. 2031, or V21, W.Nr. 2032.



The funeral at Achmer of Lt. Gerold Buss, Uffz. Johann Brösamle and Prüfmeister Fritz Tollkamp of 10./KG 2 who were killed when their Do 217 A-0, W.Nr. 2703, U5+KU, crashed at Westerkappeln near Osnabrück on 30 March 1942.

A Do 217 C-0, W.Nr. 2719. Only ten were built and this aircraft is powered by Jumo 211 engines. The last letters of the Stammkennzeichen are +VA.

Do 217 V7, W.Nr. 2707, D-ACBF/CO+JK, was originally fitted with BMW 139 engines but would later be fitted with BMW 801 engines and as such was the predecessor of the Do 217 E-1.

Do 217 V9, W.Nr. 2709, seen here fitted with BMW 801 engines.

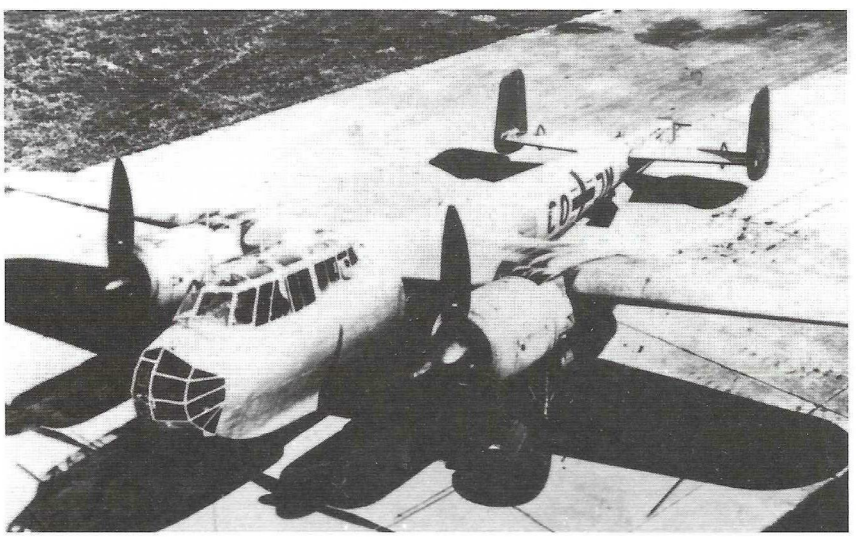
Flugzeugführerschule (C) 5 (FFS (C) 5) and was still recorded at Neubrandenburg in January 1943.

Nine Do 217 C-0s (W.Nr. 2710 to 2718) were built, powered by Jumo 211B or DB 601 A engines and intended as bombers but, like the Do 217 A-0, they played only a minor part in the Do 217 story. One, W.Nr. 2710, is known to have been lost in an accident flying with the *Erprobungsstaffel der Luftwaffe* at Rechlin, north-east of Burg, on 4 July 1941, killing test pilot Adolf Ostermaier and two crew.

Both the Do 217 A-0 and C-0 were very much secondary to what would become the first Do 217 to enter full operational service – the Do 217 E. The Do 217 C would be the basis for the Do 217 E-1, powered by BMW 801 MA-1 engines. This first flew on 1 October 1940, the same month that Do 17 production ceased and, unusually for German prototype aircraft, testing it proved to be relatively problem free. By the end of March 1941, 37 Do 217 E-1s had been built and test-flown, and a total of 94 would be built before the arrival of the Do 217 E-2, of which another 185 would be built. Therefore, following the heavy losses suffered by the Do 17 units over Poland, France and in the campaign against Britain, priority was given to bomber production and in particular the next generation of Dornier bombers.

The differences between the E-1 and E-2 were that the E-1 was initially fitted with up to seven MG 15 7.92 mm machine guns for defence and a fixed forward-firing 20 mm MG 151 for low-level and anti-shipping attacks. The E-2 had three MG 15s and two 13 mm MG 131s plus the fixed forward-firing MG 151. One of the MG 131s was fitted in a rear-firing dorsal turret located at the rear of the cockpit.

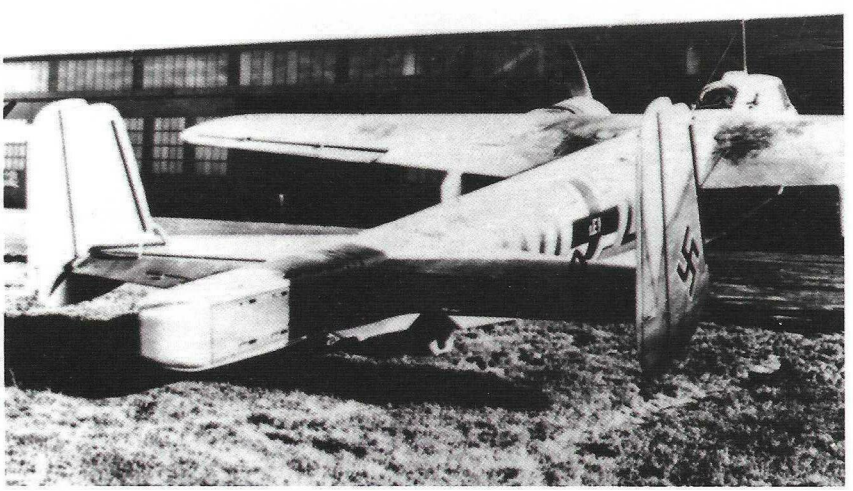
By the start of 1941, it was clear that it would not be long before the Do 217 went into action to replace the ageing and depleted Do 17 units, most of which had by then converted to the Ju 88 or were in the process of doing so. By means of example, *Ofw.* Hans Wolff of 6./KG 2 was, by the end of the campaign against Britain, an experienced Do 17 pilot and would be commissioned as an *Oberleutnant* at the start of November 1940. Indicative of the limited future of the Do 17, he and a number of other crews from

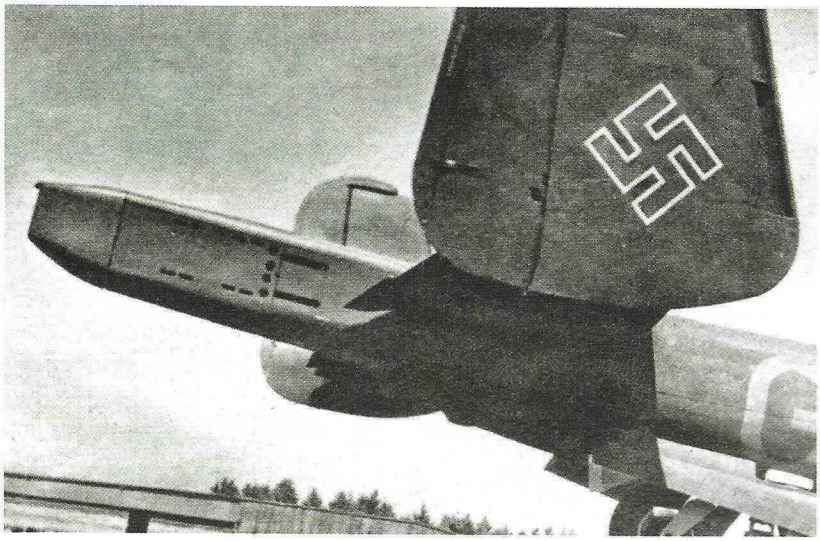


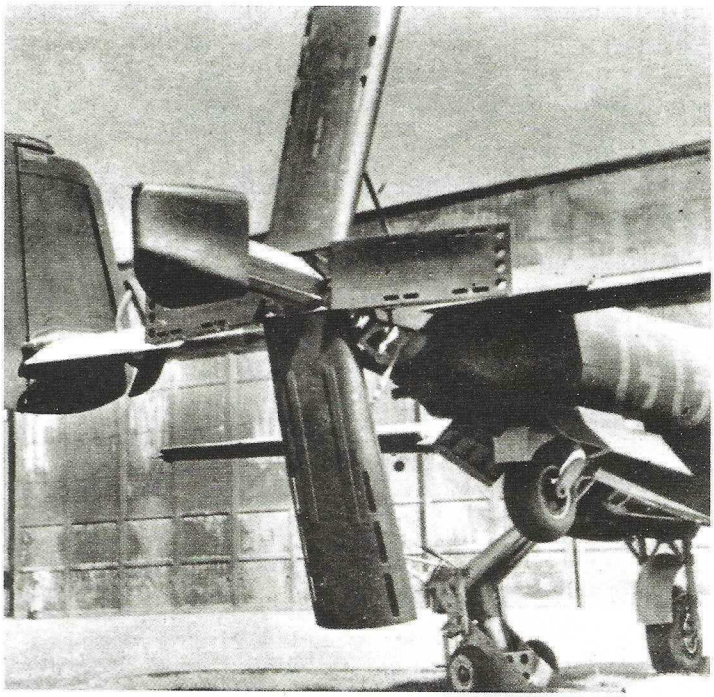
KG 2 went to Oberpfaffenhofen as early as 18 January 1941 for familiarisation on the Do 217. They did not return to the Front until 24 February when Wolff would continue flying the Do 17 until May 1941, after which he and his *Staffel* would start conversion training on the new bomber.

It would now be a matter of time before the Do 217 at last went into action.

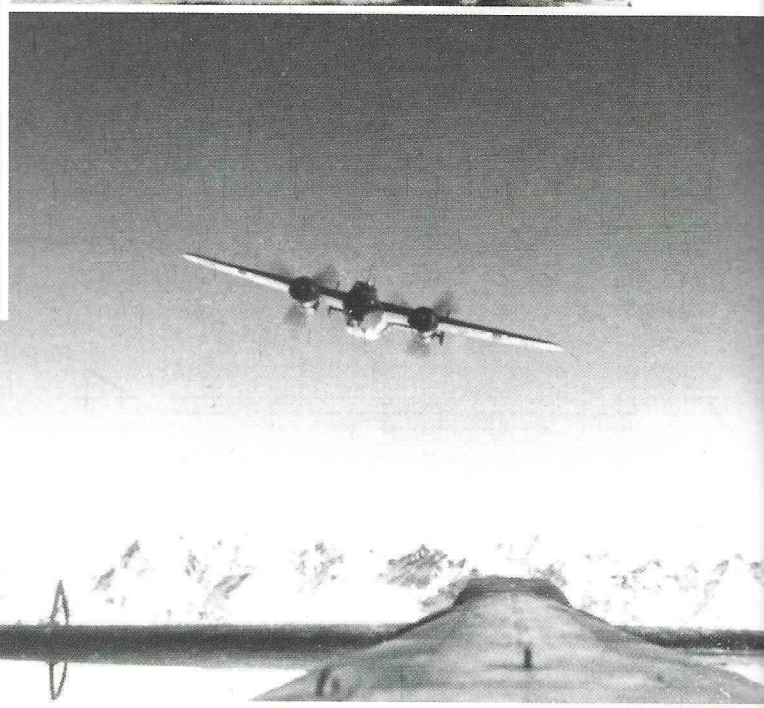
Rear view of Do 217 E-1, W.Nr. 1006, DD+LF, showing the dive-brake housing. This aircraft was damaged in a training accident on 11 April 1941 while flying with 6./KG 40 and coded F8+HP.

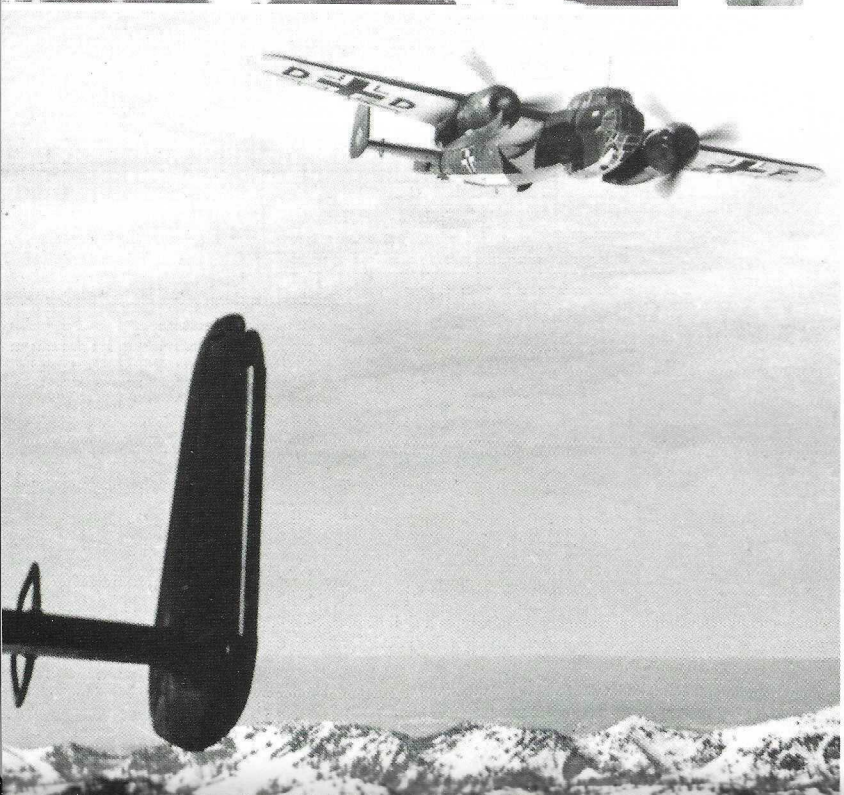




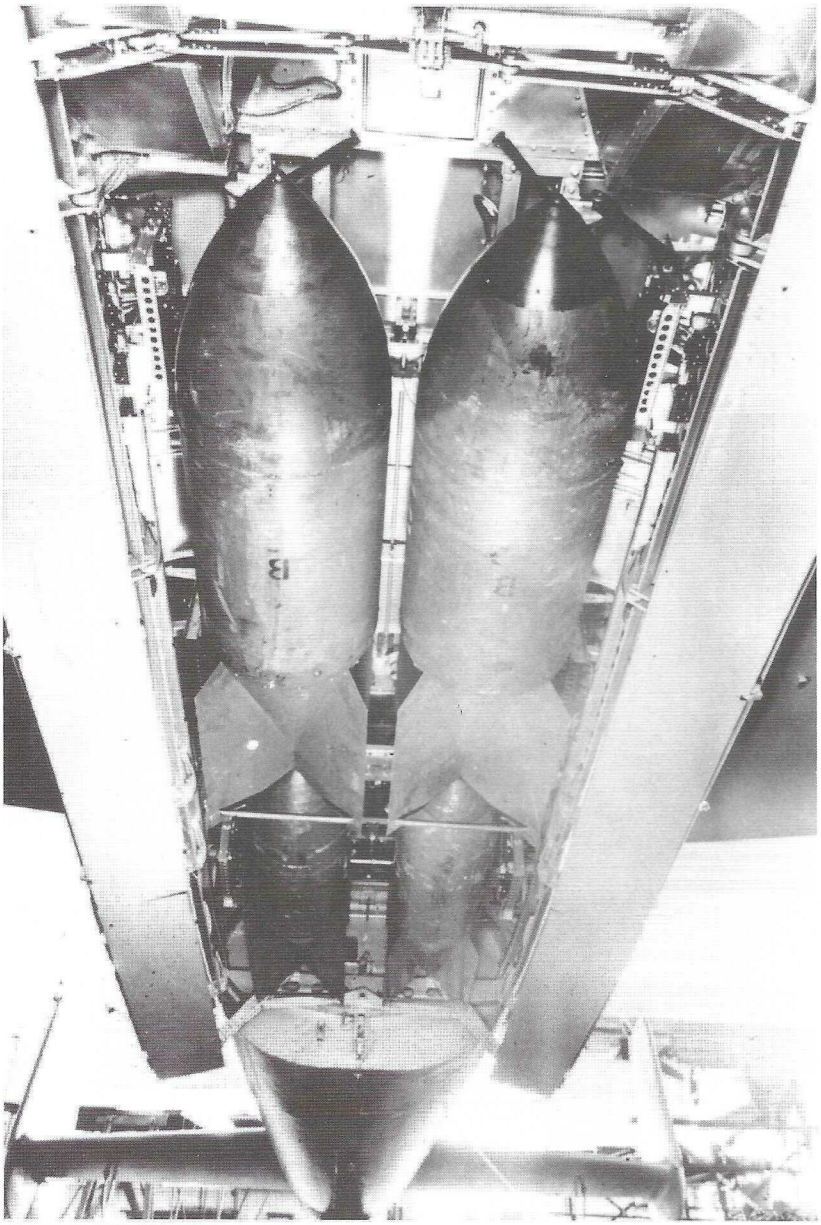


Above and right: Closer views of a closed and extended dive brake on a Do 217 E-4.



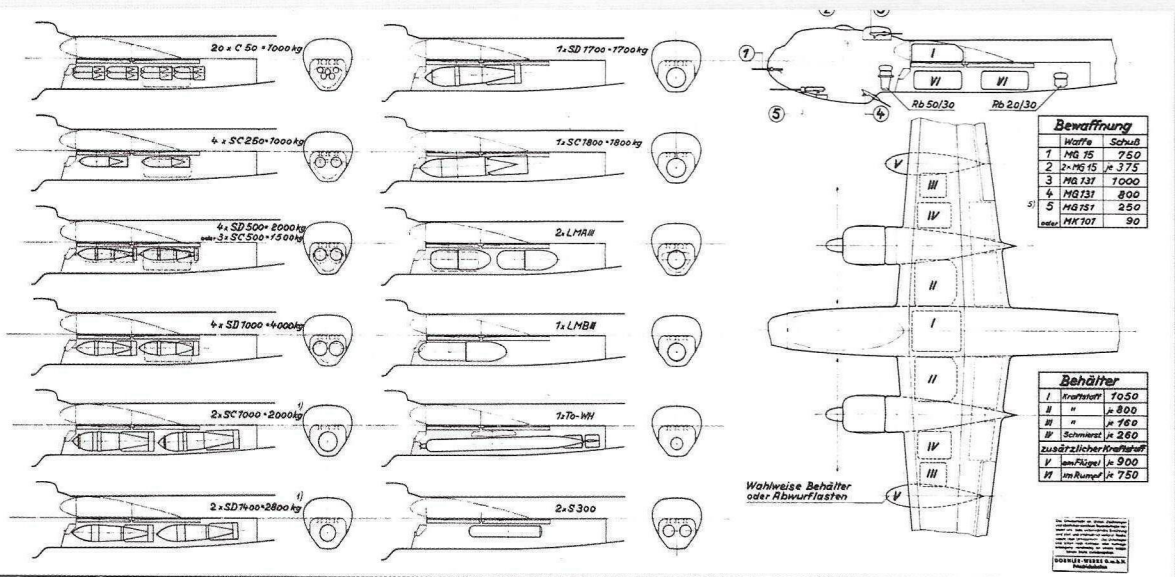


A series of Dornier in-flight press photographs of Do 217 E-1, W.Nr. 1006, DD+LF, prior to moving to 6./KG 40 where it became F8+HP.



Two 500-kg bombs ahead of two 250-kg bombs seen in the bomb bay of a Do 217 E-1. The Do 217 E could carry four 500-kg bombs internally.

Below: A Dornier document dated 12 July 1940 detailing the internal bomb load configurations, fuselage and wing fuel tank capacities, and armament of the Do 217 E-2. The lower table shows the respective total weights arising from different weights of bomb load together with fuel, oil, ammunition and crew along with resulting ranges and speeds.


20 x C 50 = 1000 kg
4 x SC 250 = 1000 kg
4 x SD 500 = 2000 kg
oder 3 x SC 500 = 1500 kg
4 x SD 1000 = 4000 kg
2 x SC 1000 = 2000 kg
2 x SD 1400 = 2800 kg
1 x SD 1700 = 1700 kg
1 x SC 1800 = 1800 kg
2 x LMA III
1 x LMB III
1 x To-WH
2 x S 300
Rb 50/30
Rb 20/30
Wahlweise Behälter oder Abwurflasten
Bewaffnung
Waffe | Schuß
1 MG 15 | 750
2 2 x MG 15 | je 375
3 MG 131 | 1000
4 MG 131 | 800
5 MG 151 | 250
oder MK 101 | 90
Behälter
I Kraftstoff | 1050
II " | je 800
III " | je 760
IV Schmierst. | je 260
zusätzlicher Kraftstoff
V am Flügel | je 900
VI im Rumpf | je 750

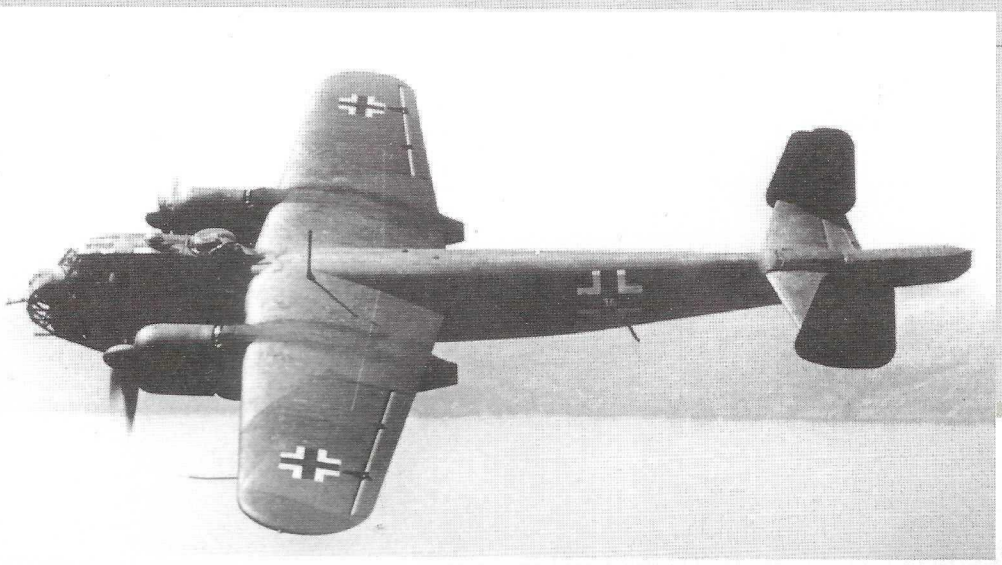
Abwurflasten	~ 1000 kg					~ 1500 kg						~ 1700 kg	~ 1800 kg	~ 2000 kg								~ 3000 kg		~ 3700 kg	~ 4000 kg
Kraftstoffanlage	ohne zusätzlichen Kraftstoff	mit innerm Rumpf-zusatz-behälter	mit 2 Rumpf-zusatz-behältern	mit Flügelzusatz-behältern innen	mit Flügelzusatz-behältern außen + Rumpf-zusatzbehälter	ohne zusätzlichen Kraftstoff	mit innerm Rumpf-zusatzbehälter	mit 2 Rumpfzusatzbehältern	mit Flügelzusatzbehältern			ohne zusätzlichen Kraftstoff	mit zwei Flügelbehältern	ohne zusätzlichen Kraftstoff	mit zwei Flügelbehältern	ohne zusätzlichen Kraftstoff		mit innerm Rumpf-zusatzbehälter	mit zwei Rumpfzusatzbehältern	Flügelzusatzbehältern	mit zwei	ohne zusätzlichen Kraftstoff	mit innerm Rumpf-zusatzbehälter	mit zwei Flügel-außen-behältern	ohne zusätzlichen Kraftstoff	ohne zusätzlichen Kraftstoff
Beladefälle	4 x 250 kg / 2 x 500 kg	1 x 1000 kg	2 x LMA b	2 x 500 kg / 4 x 250 kg	1 x 1000 kg	3 x 500 kg	3 x LMA b	2 x 500 kg / 2 x 250 kg / 2 x LMA b	1 x 500 kg / 2 x 350 kg / 2 x LMA b	1 x 1000 kg / 1 x LMA b		1 x 700 kg	1 x 1700 kg	1 x 1600 kg	1 x 1800 kg	20 x 50 kg / 2 x 500 kg	1 x 1000 kg / 2 x 500 kg	2 x 1000 kg	4 x 500 kg / 1 x Rumpf / 2 x am Flügel	2 x 1000 kg	2 x LMB II	2 x 1000 kg	4 x 500 kg	3 x 1000 kg / 1 x Rumpf / 2 x am Flügel	2 x 1000 kg / 2 x 500 kg / 2 x 1000 kg	4 x 1700 kg	4 x 1000 kg
Rüstgewicht	kg	10242	10358	10581	10644	10583	10234	10324	10463	10958	10644	10429	10124	10329	10124	10329	10444	10324	10234	10463	10581	10584	10439	10444	10254	10463	10449	10229	10329
Kraftstoff (ausfliegbarer Kraftstoff)	kg	2170	2730	3270	3520	4070	2170	2170	2720	2720	3520	3520	2170	3520	2170	3520	2170	2170	2170	2730	3270	3220	3520	3520	2170	2730	3520	2170	2170
Schmierstoff	kg	220	220	220	220	300	220	220	220	220	220	220	220	220	220	220	220	220	220	220	220	220	220	220	220	220	220	220	220
Besatzung	kg	400	400	400	400	400	400	400	400	400	400	400	400	400	400	400	400	400	400	400	400	400	400	400	400	400	400	400	400
Abwurfbare Lasten	kg	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000	1500	1500	1500	1500	1500	1500	1700	1700	1800	1800	2000	2000	2000	2000	2000	1850	2000	2000	3000	3000	3000	3700	4000
Munition und Preßsauerstoff	kg	260	260	260	260	260	260	260	260	260	260	260	260	260	260	260	260	260	260	260	260	260	260	260	260	260	260	260	260
Fluggewicht	kg	14292	14958	15771	15844	16593	14784	14934	15563	15618	16344	16349	14874	16429	14974	16529	15494	15374	15284	16063	16731	16531	16839	16844	16304	17063	17849	16979	17379
Flugstrecke bei Bewerbung	km	1720	2120	2680	2680	3060	1700	1650	2080	2030	2640	2640	1690	2620	1680	2600	1640	1640	1650	2070	2380	2360	2600	2600	1600	2090	2560	1550	1520
V im Bewerbungsflug n = n 1 m 2)	km/h	475/490	470/490	460/485	460/485	445/485	470/490	455/490	460/490	460/485	460/485	460/485	470/490	460/485	470/490	460/485	455/490	455/490	465/490	460/490	455/485	460/486	460/485	460/485	470/490	465/490	455/485	460/485	460/485
Flugstrecke bei Überführung	km	3380	2910	3310	3630	4160	3320	3260	3760	3700	3600	3600	3310	3580	3300	3550	3210	3210	3250	3600	3220	3200	3560	3560	2170	2850	3500	2150	2100
V im Überführung n = n 1 m 2)	km/h	395/435	385/435	375/430	380/430	380/425	390/435	375/435	370/435	360/435	375/430	375/430	390/435	375/430	390/435	375/430	370/435	370/435	385/435	370/435	370/440	365/430	375/430	375/430	380/435	375/435	370/430	355/435	355/435
Reichweiten-Luftschraube	η_p	4,4	4,2	4,25	4,0	3,85	4,15	4,4	4,05	4,15	3,85	3,85	4,1	3,75	4,05	3,70	4,10	4,15	3,9	3,95	4,0	3,9	3,8	3,85	3,55	3,75	3,3	3,6	3,5

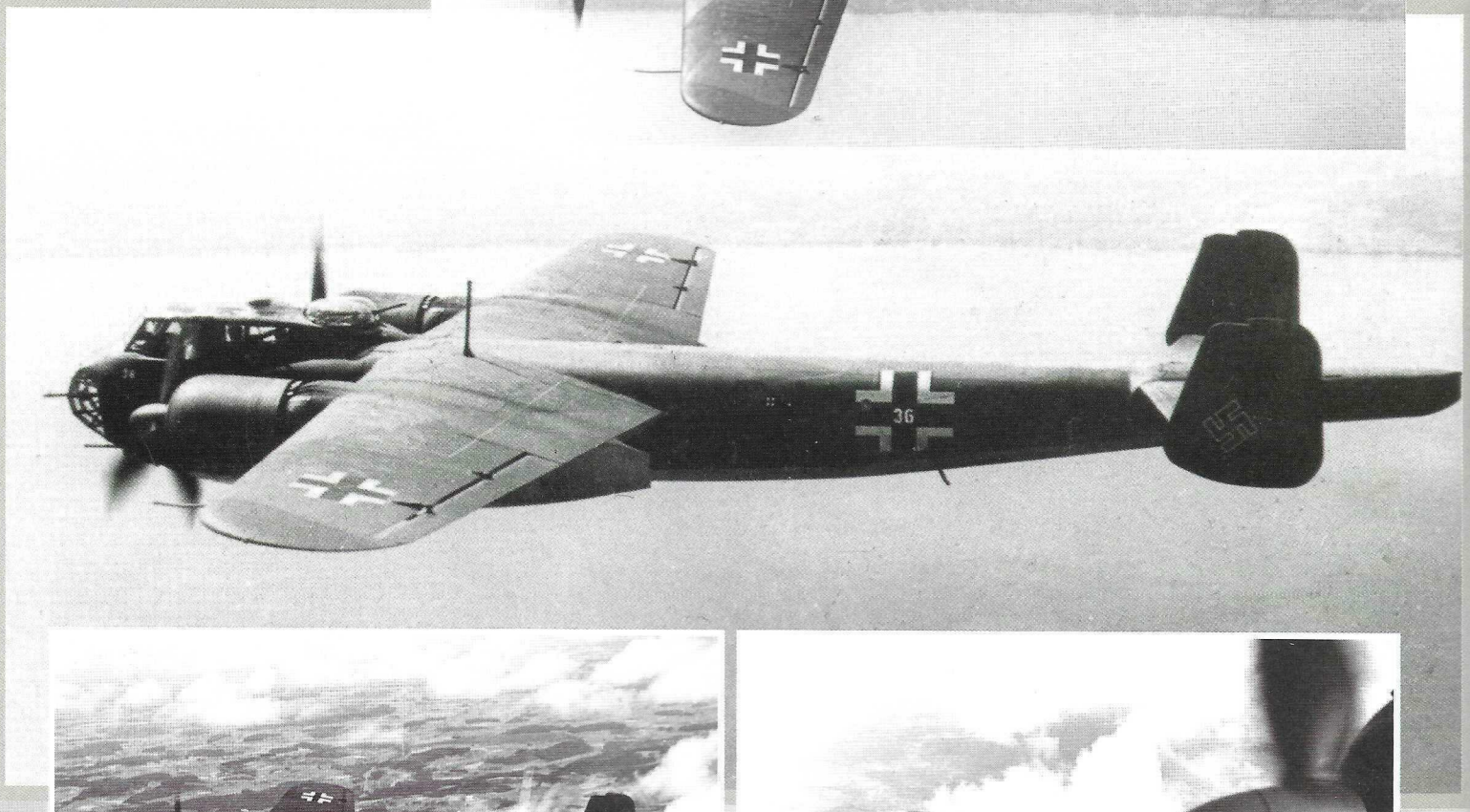
1) Inf. ist bedeutet: Start ist möglich.
2) Bei Flugstrecken über 10,5 Std Flug in geringerer Höhe.
3) Bei Flugstrecken über 11 Std Flug in geringerer Höhe muß mit größerer Leistung als Bewerbung gerechnet werden.
4) Außer den aufgeführten Fällen sind auch die übrigen noch gerechneten Belastungen möglich z.B. 10 x 250 kg, 1 x 50 kg und Mischlasten. Flugstrecken bereits entsprechend verringert.
5) Im Gewicht ist Pos 5 mit 170 kg eingesetzt.

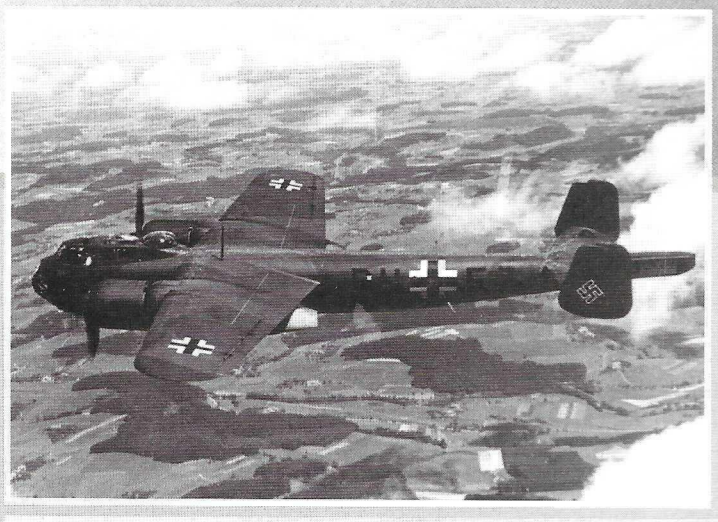
Beladeмöglichkeiten und Leistungen
Do 217 E_2 mit BMW 801 A.

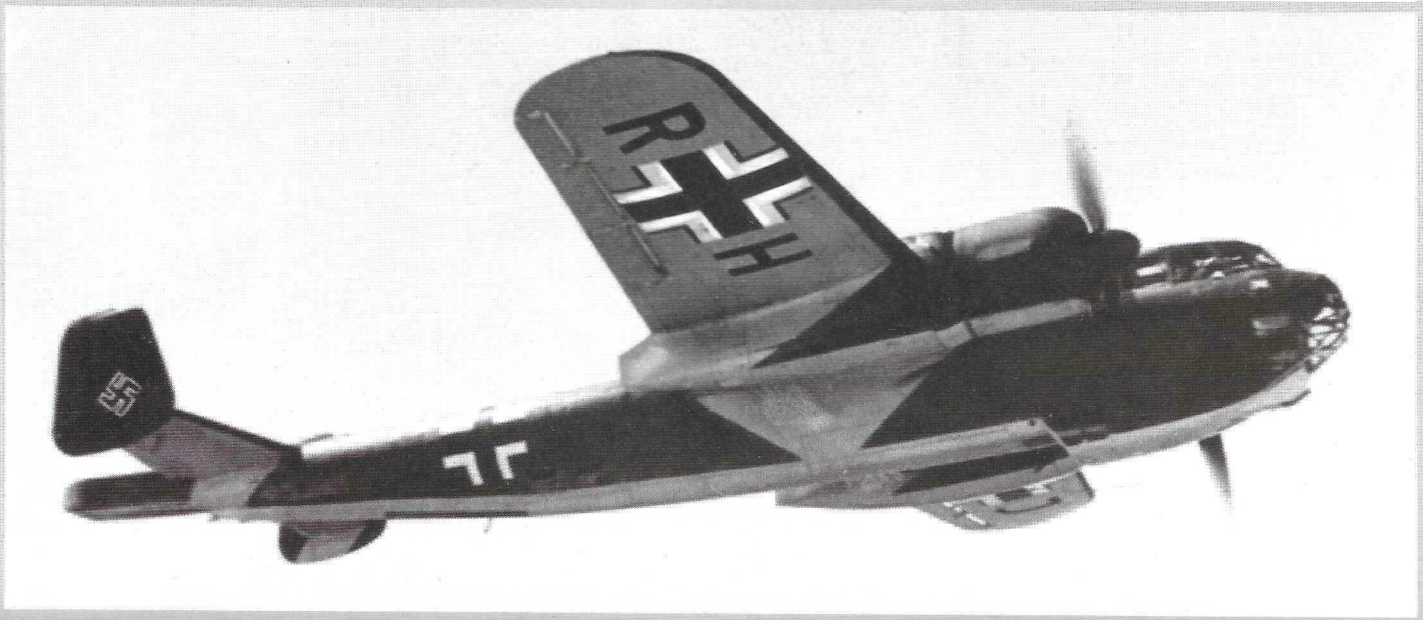
Do 217 E_2
T 101, 12.7.1940 Entw. Nr. 30288 443 600

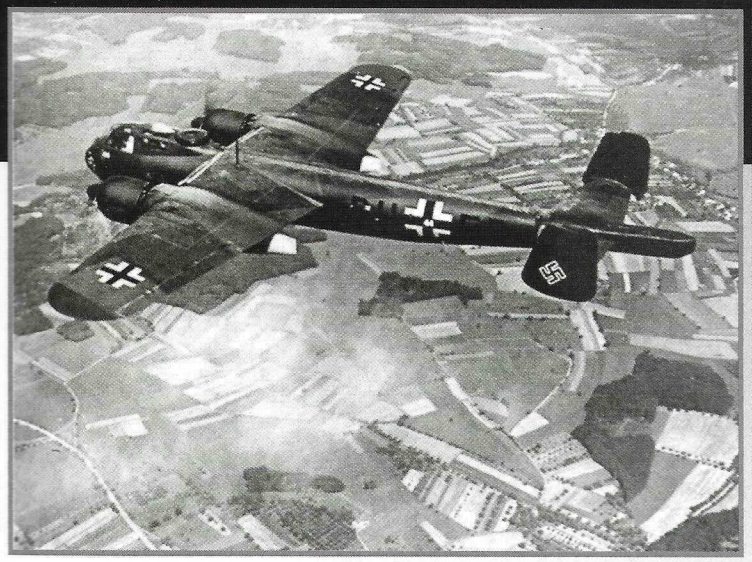
Do 217 E-2, W.Nr. 1136, RH+EJ, seen on flight trials. Note the turret which differentiated the E-2 from the E-1 and the elongated tail for a dive brake. This aircraft was later upgraded to an E-4 and was lost in action on 4 February 1943 with 5./KG 2. By then coded U5+DN, it crashed off Frinton-on-Sea in Essex killing Fw. Hans Menzel and his crew.

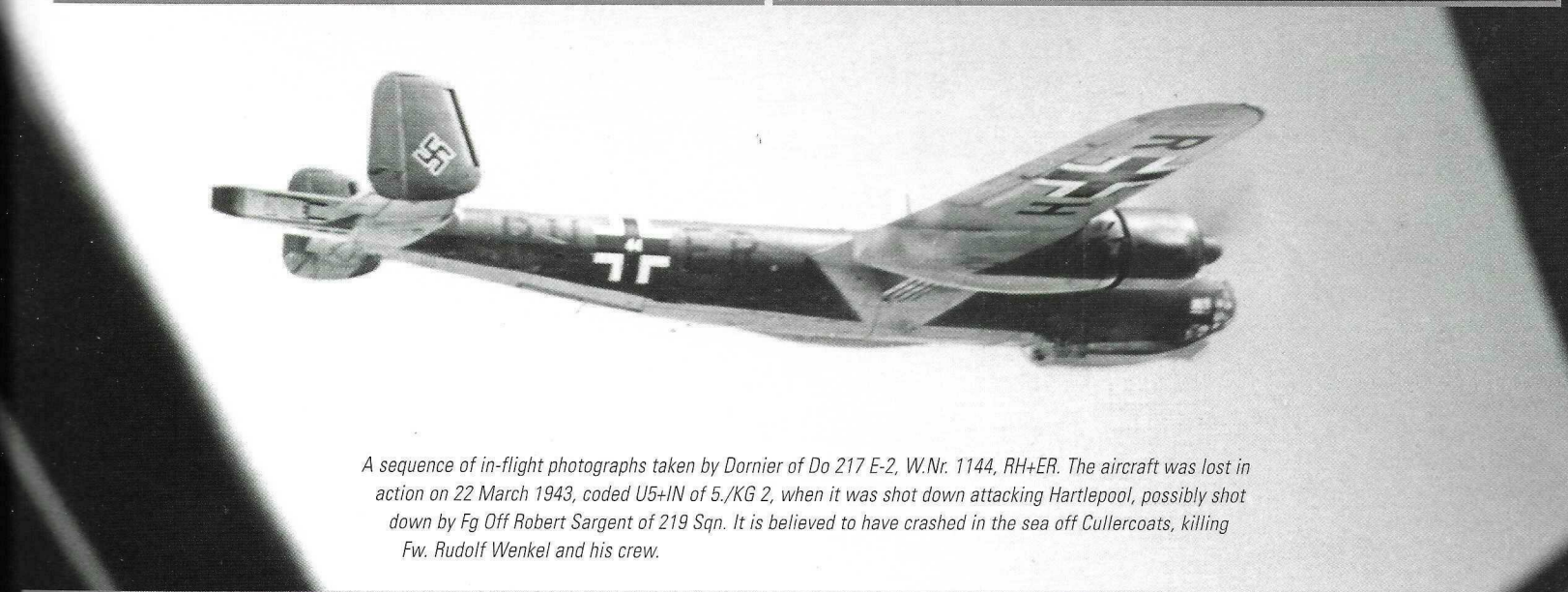




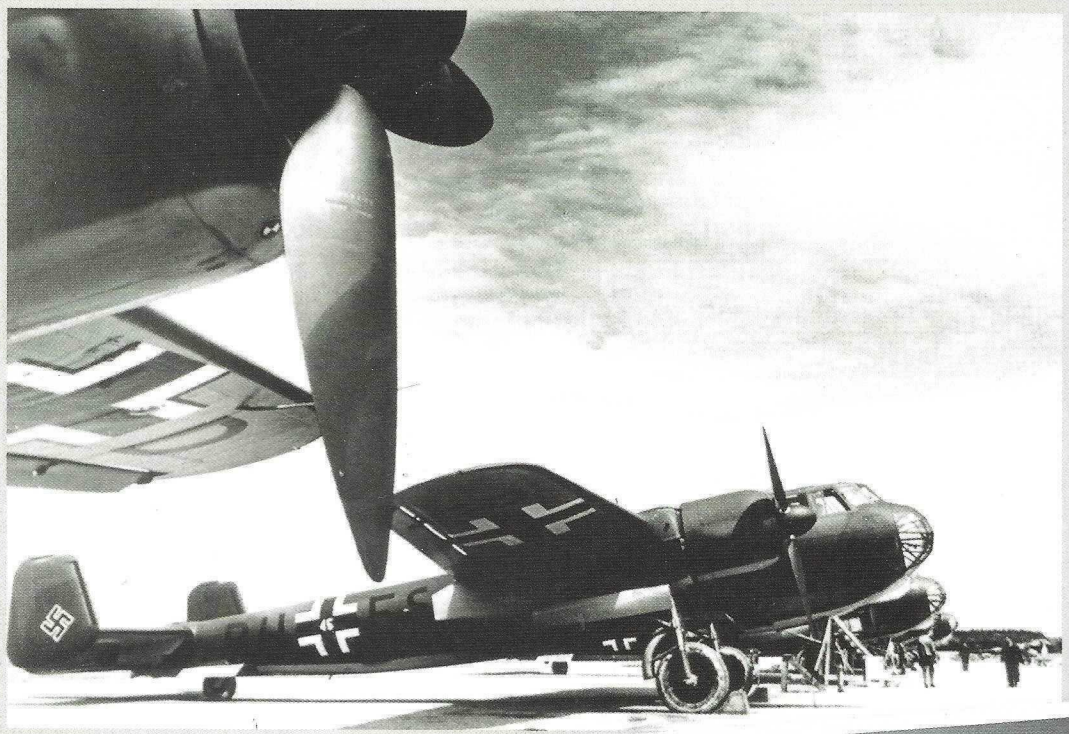






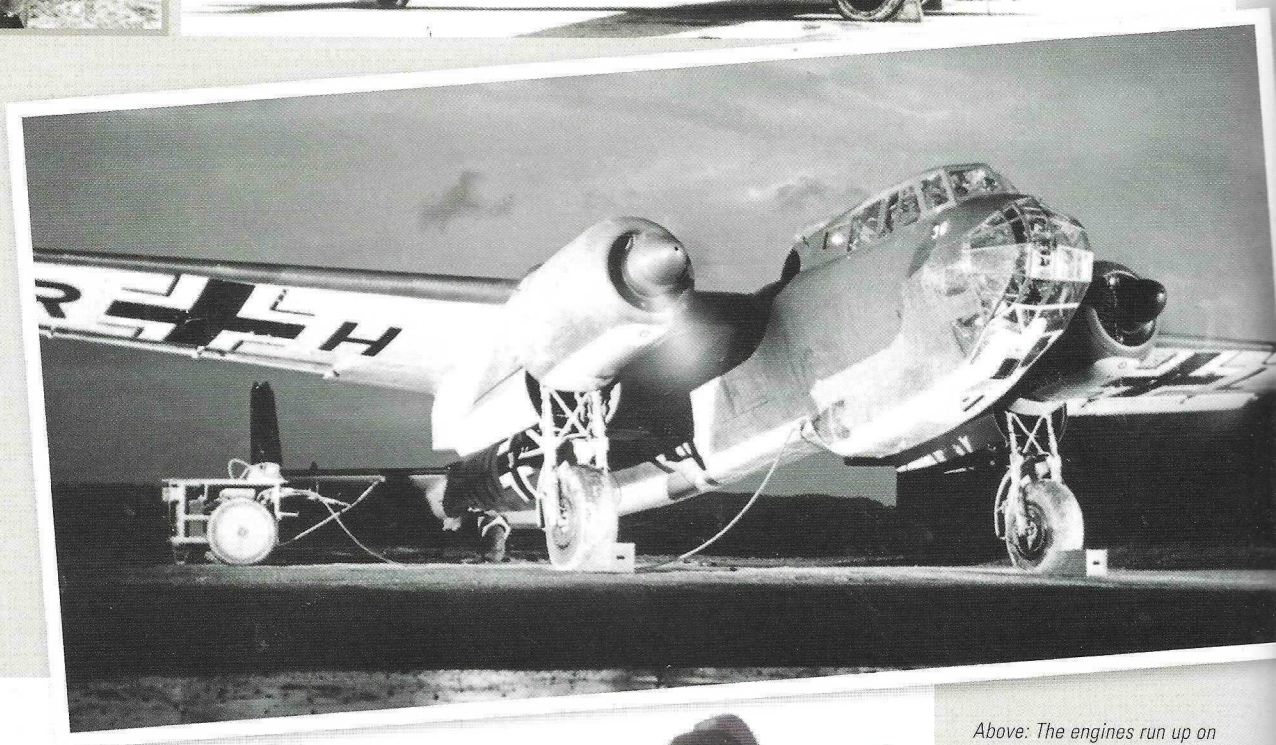


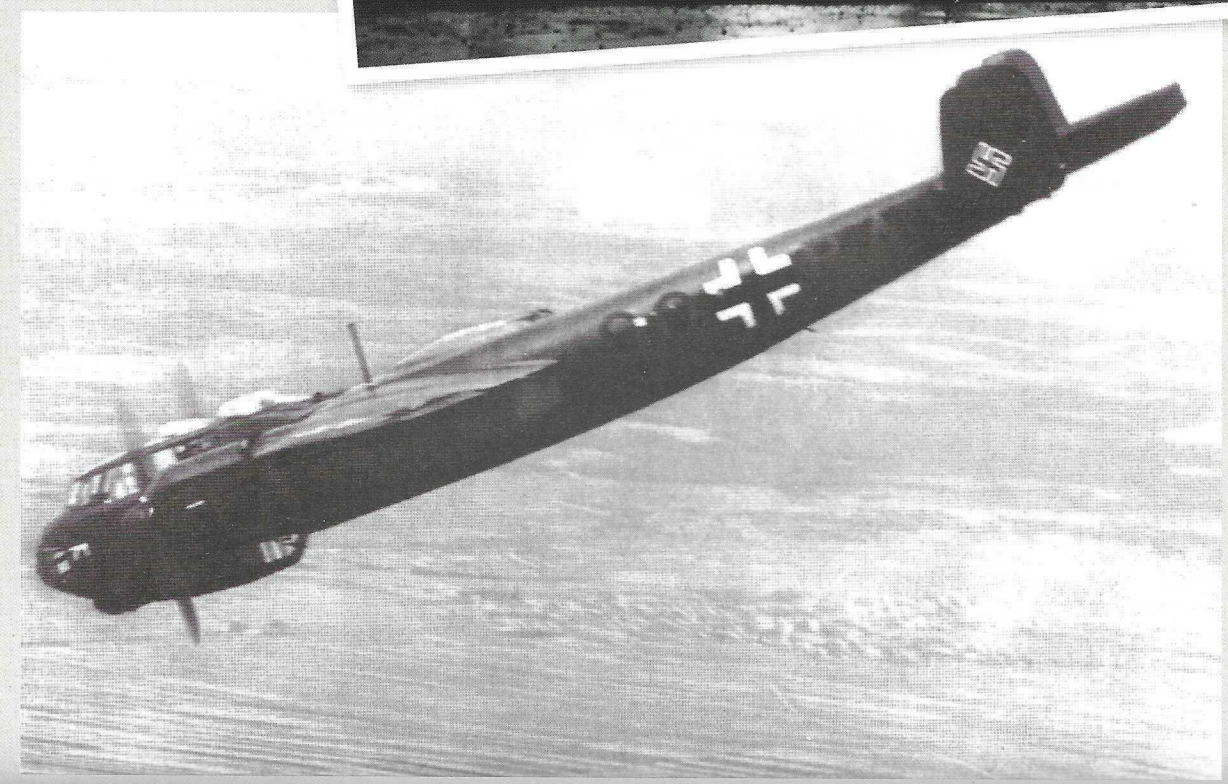
A sequence of in-flight photographs taken by Dornier of Do 217 E-2, W.Nr. 1144, RH+ER. The aircraft was lost in action on 22 March 1943, coded U5+IN of 5./KG 2, when it was shot down attacking Hartlepool, possibly shot down by Fg Off Robert Sargent of 219 Sqn. It is believed to have crashed in the sea off Cullercoats, killing Fw. Rudolf Wenkel and his crew.



Oblt. Hans Wolff (seen here before he was commissioned) was an experienced Do 17 pilot who would be introduced to the Do 217 in January 1941.

Top right: Do 217 E-2, W.Nr. 1145, coded RH+ES. Note the last two digits of the W.Nr. inside the fuselage cross. This aircraft was later upgraded to a Do 217 E-4 and was badly damaged at Vannes on 11 August 1943 when a tyre burst on landing. By that time it was coded U5+ZN of 5./KG 2 and was flown by Uffz. Ulrich Bachmann who, with his crew, were uninjured.



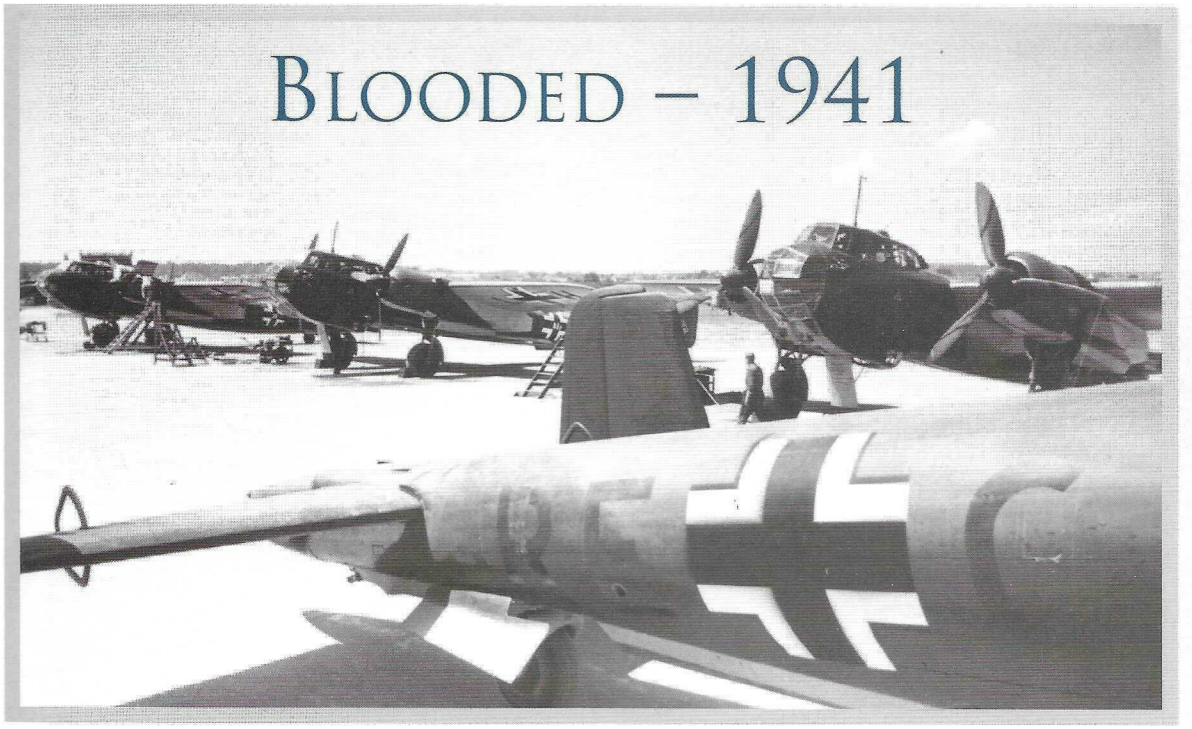


Above: The engines run up on Do 217 E-2, W.Nr. 1138, RH+EL. It has the last two digits of the Werknummer on both the fuselage cross and nose. It was upgraded to an E-4 variant and on 18 April 1943 it was damaged in an accident at Salon in France while serving with II./KG 101.

Left: Do 217 E-4, GG+PA, undergoing trials; note the last two digits of the Werknummer, 71, on the nose.

CHAPTER TWO

BLOODED – 1941



New Do 217 Es photographed in the sun awaiting delivery. They are believed to be: (back left) Do 217 E-1, W.Nr. 1029, TC+ZC, (damaged in an accident at Evreux on 28 July 1941 when with II./KG 2); and (centre) the E-1, W.Nr. 1008, DD+LH. At front is believed to be Do 217 E-2, W.Nr. 1123, RE+CW, lost with 4./KG 2 as U5+EM on 1 November 1941 when shot down by 307 Sqn.

TESTING of the Do 217 continued with the *Erprobungsstaffel der Luftwaffe* at Rechlin from late 1940 onwards despite full testing not being completed by the Luftwaffe until March 1942. The first unit to commence conversion to the new type was *Maj.* Kurt Rohde's II./KG 2 in the spring of 1941. II./KG 2, less 6.*Staffel* which would convert a few months later, had returned to Achmer in March-April 1941 to start training and would be followed by *Oberst* Heinrich Conrady's III./KG 2 in September 1941 and *Maj.* Robert-Heinrich von Goddeck's I./KG 2 in November 1941 after both *Gruppen* had carried out operations with the Do 17 over Russia.

Another unit to convert to the Do 217 was *Obstlt. Dr.* Georg Pasewaldt's II./KG 40 which began forming in January 1941 as a maritime bomber unit flying the He 111. 4./KG 40 was formed initially and commanded by *Hptm.* Paul Fischer and was subordinated to the Fw 200-equipped I./KG 40. However, Fischer would never fly the Do 217 in action as on 5 June 1941 he was reported missing off the Faeroe Islands and it is believed that it was left to *Hptm.* Friedrich Wilhelm Methner to command 4.*Staffel* and to complete its conversion to the Do 217. A further two *Staffeln* were formed from May 1941 flying the newly introduced Do 217: 5./KG 40 believed to be commanded by *Hptm.* Otto Kettler and 6./KG 40 believed to be commanded by *Oblt.* Hermann Schröter, while 4./KG 40 would convert to the Do 217 from June 1941 onwards. When expanded to *Gruppe* strength, the *Gruppe* moved from being subordinate to I./KG 40 to be a part of KG 40 itself and would be commanded by *Hptm.* Wendt *Freiherr* von Schlippenbach, *Obstlt. Dr.* Pasewaldt having taken command of KG 40 from October 1941.

The first unit to suffer any kind of loss was 6./KG 2 on 22 February 1941 when Do 217 E-1 flown by

Above: Lt. Karl von Manowarda (second from left) began converting to the Do 217 with 10./KG 2 at Achmer in November 1941 after flying with 5. and then Stab./KG 2 from August 1940. He would not fly his first operational flight in the Do 217 until 9 May 1942 after he had been posted to Stab I./KG 2. Left to right: Uffz. Ernst Geselle (killed in action on 24 June 1942); von Manowarda (POW with 1./KG 6 on 15 May 1944); Fw. Rudolf Leitgebel; Uffz. Heinrich Kaiser (killed with 1./KG 6 on 15 May 1944).

Lt. Valentin Wagner suffered an engine failure at Crailsheim while on 11 April 1941, Do 217 E-1 W.Nr. 1006 coded F8+HP of 6./KG 40 also suffered a minor accident. It would not be much longer before the Do 217 was ready for operations.

Conversion training complete, II./KG 2 moved to Evreux in France at the start of July 1941 and its first mission was believed to have been against the RAF airfield at Pembrey in south Wales on the night of 5-6 July 1941. It was not long before the first loss came when, during a

Flt Lt Henryk Szczesny of 317 Sqn was one of two pilots to shoot down a Do 217 on 14 July 1941 (via Wojtek Matusiak).

The second 317 Sqn pilot was Sgt Stanislaw Brzeski. The two Hurricane pilots shot down the Do 217 E-1, W.Nr. 5075, U5+GN, of 5./KG 2 into the sea south of Tenby, killing Fw. Kurt Bergmann and his crew (via Wojtek Matusiak).

Hptm. Walter Bornschein of 4./KG 4. He wears the Deutsches Kreuz, bomber crew mission clasp, Iron Cross First Class, pilot's badge and wound badge. Bornschein would be killed in action on 27 April 1944.

series of daylight attacks on shipping on 14 July 1941, the Do 217 E-1 of 5./KG 2 flown by *Fw.* Kurt Bergmann reported being under attack by fighters near Lands End at 1605 hrs and failed to return. At around the same time, Polish Hurricane pilots Flt Lt Henryk Szczesny and Sgt Stanislaw Brzeski of 317 Sqn reported shooting down what they thought was a Ju 88 south of Tenby. Their combat report read as follows:

> 'Blue Section took off from Fairwood Common to Patrol convoy 10 miles south of Worms Head. At 1620 hrs when in position received no vector. While turning to port in steep bank at 600-1,000 ft, Blue 1 sighted Ju 88 [sic] approaching convoy from north to south 500 yds away and at sea-level. Blue 1 informed Blue 2 and ordered him to follow giving boost. Blue 1 dived [in a] head on attack and a little to starboard towards e/a, turning sharply to port delivering two two-second bursts at 200 yds on e/a port beam on same level. E/a remained on same course and Blue 1 followed continuing to turn to port. Meanwhile Blue 2 cut across to port and also delivered beam attack at 250 yds firing continuous bursts. E/a jettisoned bombs 150 yds before convoy and hopped over first ship causing Blue 1 to hold his fire. As e/a rose over second ship, Blue 1 opened fire at 250 yds closing to 50 yds. They flew beside e/a as it lost speed from 220-120 mph at sea-level the tail touched the water twice and e/a hit the water with starboard wing and sank, tail disappearing.'

The location, time and the fact that no other German aircraft were lost this day would indicate that the two Polish pilots had accounted for the first Do 217. The first loss to II./KG 40 came on the night of 9 August 1941 when *Oblt.* Kurt Müller of the *Gruppe Stab* failed to return from an unspecified mission but believed to be an attack on a convoy in the North Sea. The cause of this loss is unknown.

The intensity of operations compared to a year earlier were now considerably less and the Luftwaffe used smaller numbers of aircraft both by night or in poor weather, but still the Do 217 was an unfamiliar aircraft to the RAF and the lack of knowledge of the type resulted in misidentification. It appears that the main type of mission was anti-shipping or operations against coastal targets with standard bomb loads and a crew of four. By means of example, on 16 July 1941 Plt Off Bob Masters of 234 Sqn claimed to have shot down a 'dark camouflaged Do 215' 20 miles south of Portland at 1100 hrs, when in fact he shot down the Do 217 E-1 of 4./KG 2 flown by *Lt.* Anton Wieners which had been briefed to attack Gloucester; Masters' combat report relates what happened:

> 'While on convoy patrol approximately 10 miles south of Portland, Green 1 sighted an aircraft flying low over the convoy and instructed me to investigate. I closed in on the aircraft and identified it as an enemy aircraft (Do 215). I closed in from astern and carried out three attacks. On my first and second attacks I experienced return fire from top rear gunner. On my third attack, return gunfire ceased and oil covered my aircraft and I noticed smoke pouring from the e/a's port engine. I then got ahead and a little above the e/a and carried out a head on beam attack. I closed to very close range and observed the form of the pilot and also noticed my bullets striking e/a from nose to tail. On breaking away from this attack, I entered cloud and lost sight of the e/a. I descended through cloud and I observed a large disturbance on the surface with oil, smoke and debris all around it. E/a went in approximately 10-12 miles south of convoy and was camouflaged black.'

Wieners' last radio message corresponds with the time that the combat took place. Wieners was a bad loss for KG 2 as he had over 100 operational flights and was expected to receive the *Ritterkreuz.* He had been injured in an accident on 16 April 1940 after which he had flown through the Battle of France, against Britain and in the Blitz. His premature death meant that he received no major award for his operational career.

Typifying Do 217 operations in the latter half of 1941, the logbook of *Oblt.* Walter Bornschein of 4./KG 2 is a good example of what KG 2's pilots were doing in the Do 217's first five months of operations. He began converting to the Do 217 on 13 March 1941 and did not arrive at Evreux with his crew until 2 July 1941. His first operational flight came on the night of 17 July 1941 on what would be the first major attack against a land target by the Do 217. Seven Do 217s from II./KG 2 made up the attacking force of 67 He 111s and 25 Ju 88s attacking Hull. All the German aircraft returned without loss from what was a successful attack, as the official British report shows:

> Another very serious raid involving approximately 30 enemy aircraft was made between 0210 and 0030 hrs. Damage was widespread and 60 pumps were brought in to deal with the fires which numbered 160 in all. The central eastern and south-western districts suffered chiefly and both industrial and residential property was severely damaged. Communications with the docks area were disorganised and the position with regard to gas and water was considered serious. Several public buildings were damaged and included in this were a Toc H hostel, a savings bank, Police station, cinema and a Roman Catholic church. The GPO was affected and the Exchange evacuated although it is reported that no telephone Exchanges were damaged but 2,000 lines were affected. A First Aid Post received a direct hit. Transport generally was not affected but certain goods lines on the railway were held up. The Stoneferry district was particularly affected by fire. It is reported that 10 of the 120 incidents which occurred during the raid were shelter ones. 12 rescue parties and 18 mobile canteens were called in from other districts. 2,099 people were rendered homeless. The casualties amount to 113 killed, 108 seriously and 169 slightly injured.'

On the night of 31 July 1941, the Do 217 accounted for its first enemy aircraft, albeit the German crew were unable to celebrate this fact. During an attack on shipping with an alternative target of RAF St. Eval in Cornwall, the last radio message from *Ofw.* Hermann Veit and his crew from 4./KG 2 was at 2141 hrs. However, at 2250 hrs, what was thought to be a Do 17 Z was intercepted by Flt Lt John Carver and Plt Off Ralph Price of 247 Sqn 14 miles south of Lizard Point; John Carver relates what happened:

> 'I saw e/a a mile to my starboard (500 ft). Gave chase with Blue 2 and came level with e/a 500 yds to port of e/a. Ordered Blue 2 during chase to go up on starboard of e/a. Because of cloud cover could not wait for Blue 2 to get into position. Closed gradually on e/a in order to identify. Fire was opened by e/a when 150 yds away and I turned in for an astern attack. Further attacks then delivered and

Flt Lt John Carver of 247 Sqn (standing centre, seen here commanding 118 Sqn in 1942) witnessed Plt Off Ralph Price collide with the Do 217 flown by Ofw. Hermann Veit on 31 July 1941.

starboard engine of e/a set on fire. Broke away having fired all ammunition. Saw Blue 2 then attack, overshoot and collide with e/a. Claim one Do 17 Z as destroyed.'

Twenty-two-year-old Price and all four German crew were killed.

On 21 August 1941 it was the turn of 6./KG 40 to suffer a loss when *Lt.* Hans Röpke failed to return from a sortie to the east coast of England and was probably the victim of Plt Off Hugh 'Johnny' Johnston of 257 Sqn who reported shooting down a Do 17 15 miles east of Lowestoft while patrolling convoy PADDLE. Johnston's Hurricane was damaged by return fire when a single bullet pierced the engine cowling, went through the bulkhead and into the glycol tank; he reported what happened:

'Plt Off Johnston noticed a bomb burst in the sea in south-west direction. He followed at full boost in this direction and picked out an aircraft flying south-east at 1,000 ft. He followed and keeping well beneath gradually overtook the aircraft until he could see it against the light to the north when he identified it as a Do 17. He then pulled up his nose and delivered a quarter attack from the starboard closing to astern at 80 to 120 yds range. He repeated this attack and received return fire from the lower rear ventral gun. He noticed a flash on the starboard wing of e/a which gradually grew into a fire. He then delivered two quarter attacks from the port side at 80 to 120 yds range without observing any further results except that glycol flew back onto his windscreen. By now the fire in the starboard wing was considerable. E/a suddenly slowed down, lost height and glided onto the sea. The fire went out as e/a disappeared in a patch of foam. No survivors observed.'

Finally, on the evening of 7 September 1941, Fg Off Robert 'Moose' Fumerton of 406 Sqn damaged what he thought was a He 111 which was engaged in an attack on Newcastle. It was more likely that he mortally damaged a Do 217 E-1 of 4./KG 40 flown by *Fw.* Walter Monning which subsequently crashed into the North Sea north-west of Texel on returning to base from this attack.

The first confirmed evidence of this new bomber came on the night of 2 October 1941 although the RAF still initially recorded the aircraft as a Do 17 despite having

Plt Off Hugh 'Johnny' Johnston of 257 Sqn (centre, standing front, seen here as a Flight Lieutenant with 165 Sqn in 1943) probably shot down the Do 217 flown by Lt. Hans Röpke of 6./KG 40 on 21 August 1941.

captured three of its crew. *Fw.* Fritz Menzel from 5./KG 2 took off from Amsterdam-Schiphol at 2000 hrs to attack Newcastle. At 2120 hrs, the radio operator *Fw.* Horst Schleussner observed what he thought was a Ju 88. What he had in fact spotted was a Beaufighter of 406 Sqn flown by Wg Cdr Douglas 'Zulu' Morris with Sgt Archie Rix as his radar operator, who reported the following during what was a memorable evening:

'Wg Cdr Morris with Sgt Rix as his AI operator scored two victories in one flight. At 2050 hrs a He 111 was seen as it crossed the coast near Lexbury. Despite its violent attempt at evasion, over Alnwick our aircraft opened fire which was returned. After a closing chase from 9,000 to 5,000 ft eastwards, the Beaufighter got in a second burst from which flashes were seen in the enemy aircraft which was lost at 4,500 ft still diving. It was learned later that one of the crew took to his parachute to escape from flames and was injured and captured. Nothing was seen of the Heinkel's end except a possible flash near Alnmouth.'

This was a He 111 H-6 of 9./KG 40 flown by *Lt.* Walter Leitenberger which managed to get back damaged to Soesterberg, the captured crewman being *Gefr.* Walter Kaiser. This crew would be shot down and killed by another Beaufighter, this time from 600 Sqn, on 10 October 1941. Meanwhile, Wg Cdr Morris's report continued:

'After reloading the cannon, the Beaufighter returned to GCI and at 2115 hrs made contact with a Do 17 approaching Tynemouth from the east. Closing to 2,500 ft on AI, our aircraft made a three-quarter circle to port and pursued the enemy as he turned south. First burst at 100 yds was returned; a second was followed by a terrific explosion, the enemy disappeared and the Beaufighter flew through the flash and cloud of sparks. Four apparent parachutes and a mark on the surface were seen below about three miles east of Tynemouth. With port glycol tank punctured, Wg Cdr Morris landed at Acklington at 2143 hrs.'

The German survivors reported being attacked twice from the rear starboard quarter, the radio operator managing to return fire from the top turret, the aircraft being an E-2 variant. However, the rudder was damaged and *Uffz*. Arno Herold, the flight engineer, was badly wounded after which the bomber went into a spiral dive and then exploded, throwing out all four crew. The pilot subsequently drowned but the remainder were picked up by a trawler eight miles east-north-east of Tynemouth. Interrogation of the two unwounded crew revealed that they had converted to the Do 217 at Bramsche in May and June 1941 and after six weeks training, had moved to Evreux, transferring to Schiphol at the end of September 1941.

Interrogation of two of the crew, *Fw*. Josef Rüht (observer) and the radio operator, *Fw*. Horst Schleussner, meant that a detailed report on the Do 217 was produced (see below):

The RAF was now fully aware of the Do 217 and by mid-October 1941, KG 2 had lost ten Do 217 Es on operations, of which four were as a direct result of enemy action, while II./KG 40 had lost three with two definitely shot down by the RAF. All the losses so far had been over the sea but the RAF would have to wait until 12 October 1941 to get their hands on this new type first-hand. *Oblt*. Günther Dolenga of 5./KG 2 wrote what happened that night:

'On my last flight I had orders to attack shipping west of the Scilly Isles, in the Irish Sea and in the Bristol Channel. The RAF's 80 Wing hunted my crew over Britain using the Meacon stations [see below] and meaning I was walking into a trap. That's not quite right – I was in the trap, but noticing it I turned southwards receiving a bearing from Evreux. At this moment my fuel was running low as I had a block in the fuel line. At first I thought it was a nightfighter so I decided to make a crash-landing on the shore because I had a good indication that I couldn't reach the French coast. Today I am convinced that this decision was better than a crash-landing at sea and getting a wooden coat!'[1]

Pushed off track by winds, the crew were further confused by 80 Wing Meacons at Templecombe in Somerset and Newbury in Berkshire which led them to believe that they were over France, with Templecombe pretending to be the German beacon at Paimpol in Brittany. 'Meaconing' is best described as intercepting and re-broadcasting navigation signals, giving inaccurate bearings so as to confuse enemy navigation. As a result, having crossed southern England from north Devon to East Sussex, the German crew eventually crash-landed at Broomhill near Rye in East Sussex, only realising where they were when one of the crew spotted a soldier in a British steel helmet. Rushing back to the crash of their aircraft they tried to destroy the Do 217 but failed, thus handing the RAF a complete, if not bent, Do 217 E-1. Furthermore, Dolenga was an experienced pilot having flown in Poland, over Britain, in the Blitz and Greece.

1. Term for coffin.

DORNIER Do 217

British Air Technical Intelligence report based upon the interrogation of *Fw*. Josef Rüht (observer) and (radio operator), *Fw*. Horst Schleussner, in late 1941.

'[The Do 217] is a high wing low-level bomber and dive-bomber with twin engines, high levelled winged monoplane. Crew of four housed in the nose where they had ample room with good visibility. The dive brake consisted of four curved section lengths which when closed together formed a cylinder about 75 cm in length. The sections were hinged at the rear so that the airstream assisted the opening to about 30 degrees. The complete diving unit being about 1.5 m long was attached to the fuselage behind the tail. In event of a malfunction, the unit which weighed about five cwt could be jettisoned. With U5+GN, the dive brake unit was removed as soon as the crew received their aircraft.

'Entry and escape hatches: The normal method of entry into the cabin was through a trapdoor which formed the floor to the lower rear gunner's position. In an emergency both the dorsal turret and part of the roof could be jettisoned.

'Wireless: FuGe X and FuGe XVI. Bombsight: Lotfe.

'Engines: Two BMW 80114 cylinder double row radials giving 1,600 hp at take-off. Two speed superchargers rated at 4,000 m and engine cooling fan was assisted, the fan being mounted behind the airscrew, just inside the cowling and running at two-and-a-half times the aircrew speed. Oil cooling was by two radiators mounted on each side of the engine with ducts channelling air from the fan to the radiators. The exhaust gases were passed by collector rings to large manifolds on either side of the engine where each manifold branched into five smaller outlet pipes which lay parallel and ran backwards at intervals along the top of the cowling. The exits of the pipes were screened by a metal sheet strip to suppress any exhaust flame but at night when viewed from above and behind a glowing crescent was visible.

'Armament: One free forward-firing 2 cm cannon in the lower right side of the nose served by the Observer from a prone position. One fixed forward-firing 1.5 cm cannon in the centre of the nose fired by the pilot although could be unclamped and used as a free gun. One dorsal 2 cm cannon in the electrically operated turret revolving through 360 degrees, the gun being fed by a 500-round belt. Elevation, which was up to 90 degrees, was manually operated. One 1.5 cm central cannon arc of fire being horizontally along the belly to 30 degrees depression traversing to 45 degrees either side of dead astern.

'Bomb load: Four 500-kg bombs or two 1,000-kg torpedoes normal load or a maximum of four 500-kg internally mounted and two 1,000-kg externally mounted.
Armour: Pilot's seat was armoured with side flaps for head protection against beam attack along with protection behind the back of the radio operator.

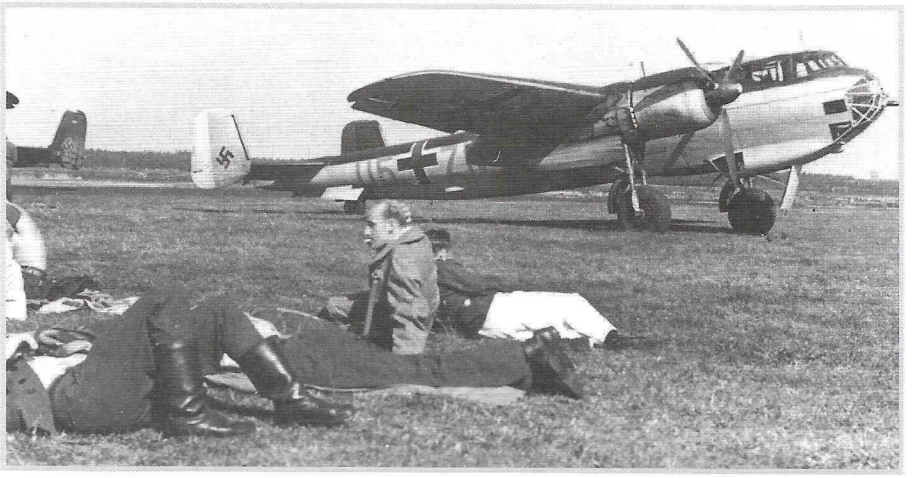
'Speed: Cruising speed was 400 kph at 4,000 m with the maximum speed being 450 kph although diving speed was 650 kph. Ceiling: Unloaded 8,900 m.'

Oblt. Günther Dolenga's Do 217 E-1, W.Nr. 5069, U5+DN, being dismantled after its forced landing on 12 October 1941 at Broomhill near Rye in East Sussex. Dolenga's landing came about as a result of spoof radio beacons broadcast by 80 Wing Meacons at Templecombe in Somerset and Newbury in Berkshire which led the crew to believe that they were over France. This became the first intact Do 217 to fall into RAF hands. Note that only the fuselage cross has been blacked-out.

He was expected to take command of 5./KG 2 from *Oblt.* Alfred Kindler. Kindler had only recently taken command of that *Staffel* following the injury of *Hptm.* Ulrich Linnemann on 6 October 1941 when Linnemann's Do 217 E-1 suffered engine failure during a mission to the Humber and the crew was forced to bail out over France. Kindler, who would be awarded the *Ritterkreuz* in 1942 after being released as a PoW, would take command of 6./KG 2 on 20 October 1942 following the death in an accident of *Ritterkreuz*-holder *Hptm.* Gerhard Czernik when his Do 217 E-2 suffered an engine failure and crashed north-east of Schiphol. Command of 5./KG 2 now went to *Hptm.* Heinz Engel, former Communications Officer of III./KG 2.

The relatively intact condition of Dolenga's aircraft gave the Royal Aircraft Establishment (RAE) at Farnborough in Hampshire ample time to carry out a full technical assessment including detailed reports on its structure, knife-edge cutters, de-icing equipment, electrical dive-bomber gear, armour plating and bombing installation. It also gave them a further opportunity to tell RAF pilots what they were up against and expanded on the previous mentioned report:

> 'The Do 217 is a twin-engined, high wing medium bomber and general reconnaissance aircraft carrying a crew of four. As in the Do 17 and Ju 88 the crew are all placed together in a cabin entirely forward of the wing leading edge. The machine has a span of 62 ft 5 ins and is entirely metal covered. The tailplane is of variable incidence and carries twin rudders and provision is made for the installation of umbrella-style tail dive brakes which were not present in the machine examined. The engines are of the BMW 801A double-row 14-cylinder radial direct injection type and are mounted in nacelles underslung from the wing. The structure of the aeroplane is divided into several main assembly units – the main wing and fuselage centre section carrying the engines,



Above: Photographed in November 1940, all four officers from 6./KG 2 would convert to the Do 217 the following year. Left to right: Oblt. Gerhard Czernik, Staffelkapitän, Ritterkreuz 16 May 1941, killed 20 October 1941; Oblt. Alfred Kindler, Ritterkreuz 24 September 1942, POW 30 July 1942; Oblt. Walter Frank, killed in action with 1./KG 2 20 July 1942; Oblt. Wolf-Dietrich Riediger.

Above: Crews relax in the sun in front of what is believed to be Do 217 E-2, W.Nr. 1145, U5+ZN, of Hptm. Heinz Engel's 5./KG 2. This aircraft is yet to have night camouflage applied and so has possibly only just been delivered. This aircraft was upgraded to an E-4 and badly damaged landing at Vannes on 11 August 1943 when a tyre burst on landing.

The scourge of the Do 217 – a Beaufighter Mk IF T4638 of 604 Sqn. 604 Sqn claimed its first Do 217 damaged on 20 October 1941 by Flt Lt Chris Hartley, who chased one from Bath to Ostend. This Beaufighter was lost in an accident on 9 November 1941 when it crashed at Grateley in Hampshire, killing pilot Fg Off Mike Staples.

undercarriage and main fuel tanks; the outer wings; the fore part of the fuselage; the rear fuselage; the tail unit. Those sub-assemblies are built up as separate units and are presumably interchangeable with their counterparts. At each main joint, the sub-assemblies are bolted together and the control, rods, electric cables and hydraulic pipelines are connected in a manner suited to ready dismantling for repair and maintenance work. This machine is remarkable for its diversity of electrical equipment; hydraulic systems being used only for the brakes and propeller pitch controls.'

Before the end of the month, a preliminary 12-page report covering every aspect of the Do 217 E-1 was produced by the RAE which was followed over the next 12 months with specialist reports focusing on aspects such as de-icing equipment and bombing installation equipment (December 1941), armour plating and electrical dive-bombing gear (January 1942), wing knife-edge cutters (*Kutonase*) (June 1942) and even in February 1943, a detailed report into the structural features was produced. Dolenga's Do 217 E-1 W.Nr. 5069 coded U5+DN would be the first of many Do 217s to crash on British soil over the next two and a half years.

The last two and a half months of 1941 would be much quieter for KG 2 and II./KG 40. Three aircraft of II./KG 2 returned damaged by AA fire and nightfighters from bombing missions over England during this period while the *Gruppe's* only combat loss occurred on 1 November 1941. On that night *Lt.* Bruno Adler from 4./KG 2 was reported missing while attacking Liverpool, probably shot down off Watchet in Somerset by a Beaufighter of 307 Sqn flown by Sgt Boleslaw Turzanski and his Nav/Rad, Sgt Henryk Ostrowski, the Polish pilot continuing a trend by incorrectly claiming a Do 215. Turzanski's report, written by the squadron's Intelligence Officer read as follows:

> 'When at 13,000 ft at 2204 hrs, our pilot was ordered to flash weapon, he obtained AI Contact at 11,000 ft range and seven minutes later he sighted e/a 200 yds dead astern and 300 ft above. Pilot identified e/a by silhouette as Do 215, exhaust flames were clearly seen. Pilot climbed to same height as e/a, approaching closer and opened attack with a three-second burst from 60 yds range aiming at port engine and causing it to burst into flames. A few minutes later the pilot gave from the same position another two-second burst aiming at the port engine resulting in a big explosion and port wing becoming detached. E/a crashed in flames a few seconds later.'

Turzanski then attacked a second 'Do 215' over an hour later:

> 'Our pilot identified e/a as a Do 215 from its silhouette. Our pilot gave a first burst from about 150 yds range from astern without result. Pilot then closed to 30 yds and gave further three-second burst from dead astern aiming at the fuselage, resulting in a terrific explosion and dense black smoke coming from fuselage. E/a then dived vertically in flames into cloud which were at about 7,000 ft. E/a was out of control and was burning even more fiercely than the first. Our pilot is absolutely sure it was destroyed.'

No other Do 217s were lost that night but a Ju 88 A-5 of *Erprobungsstaffel.*/KG 30 came down in the sea off St Alban's Head, probably shot down by Fg Off Ed Crew of 604 Sqn and a He 111 H-6 of 7./KG 40 was shot down by Plt Off Merv Shipard of 68 Sqn over Anglesey. The only other claimant that night in that area was by Flt Lt Vernon Motion and Sgt Harry 'Wizz' Uezzel of 604 Sqn who reported a spectacular combat with a 'Dornier' – which had to be a Do 217 – near Shepton Mallet:

> 'At about 2,000 ft he identified it as a Dornier by tails and speed. From the moment of visual, the e/a was making steep changes in height of 500 ft up and down and slightly weaving fast, side to side. When Beaufighter got to 1,000 yds range, he opened fire with slight deflection burst of one to two seconds and e/a took violent evasive action up to vertical bank and sharp climbing, diving and weaving. Pieces flew off the e/a but no return fire was experienced. The moon was so bright that a sort of dogfight ensued at great speed. E/a evaded by getting underneath Beaufighter but was seen by AI and visually going north and the two aircraft renewed their dogfight. Beaufighter fired again but did not hit. Evasive action was again violent and e/a turned south. Beaufighter and e/a were then at 11,000 ft and e/a dived down and got out of AI reach, descending to 6,000 ft and travelling south-west and was not picked up again. The operator had been thrown to the floor of the Beaufighter by the violence of the turns and dives.'

A second aircraft, a Do 217 E-2 of 5./KG 2, returned with 10 per cent damage caused by a nightfighter 30 km south-west of Weymouth and three wounded crew, one of whom was observer *Lt.* Helmut Petraschke. The pilot must have been experienced and avoided injury but his name is not known. Damage must have been light as the aircraft, W.Nr. 1154, was later converted to an E-4 and subsequently flew with flying schools. It was eventually destroyed in an accident on 23 December 1943 while with *Flugzeugführerschule* (B) 4.

The II./KG 40 continued to operate predominantly over the North Sea from Soesterburg in Holland against shipping and coastal targets. On 27 October 1941 a Do 217 E-2 flown by *Lt.* Helmut Röchl of 5./KG 40 was lost attacking the convoy FN537 consisting of 10 ships, without escort, which had sailed from Southend the previous day headed for Methil on the Firth of Forth, while another aircraft from 4./KG 40 returned with the flight engineer, *Fw.* Heinrich Herrmann, wounded, but having made no effect on the convoy. At around 1430 hrs that day Sgt John Slaney of 257 Sqn claimed an aircraft

destroyed off Happisburgh which, at last, was correctly identified as a Do 217:

> 'A convoy was the main object of attention and an almost ceaseless patrol was maintained throughout the day. At 1314 hrs, Yellow and White Sections took off and at 1406 hrs they were informed that an unidentified bomber was in the vicinity of the convoy. Directly after they saw a Dornier and gave chase. As Yellow Section could not catch the e/a they returned to base. White Section (Sgt Slaney and Sgt Whitmill) saw the Do make a bombing run and attacked as it was about to make another bombing run and shot the e/a down. This was later claimed as a Do 217.'

However, later that day Sqn Ldr Charles Green of 266 Sqn assisted by Sgt Eric Dicks-Sherwood shot down another over the convoy at 1800 hrs. The aircraft, misidentified yet again as a Do 17 Z, caught fire after being attacked and its starboard wing struck the sea, after which it cartwheeled into the water 10 miles off Happisburgh Lighthouse; there were no survivors. *Lt.* Gerhard Blaschke of 5./KG 2 reported taking off from Evreux at 1359 hrs that afternoon on an armed reconnaissance off the English east coast, landing uneventfully at Schiphol two and a half hours later and so it would appear that it was II./KG 40 which alone was responsible for sinking the 4,545 GRT SS *Antiope* and the Dutch *Friesland* (2,662 GRT) eight miles north-north-west of Cromer. The Luftwaffe reported that II./KG 40 had sunk a 6,000 GRT ship off Great Yarmouth at 1501 hrs followed by another of 5,000 GRT two minutes later and that evening damaged another ship of 5,000 BRT east of Bridlington.

The next loss came on 12 November 1941. *Oblt.* Herwig Schmid of 4./KG 40 took off from Soesterberg at 0848 hrs to carry out an armed reconnaissance along the English east coast. At 1047 hrs Schmid reported attacking a ship off Lowestoft, after which nothing further was heard from him. It is believed that he attacked the Royal Navy trawlers *Francolin,* commanded by Lt J L Dinwoodie, and *Commander Holbrook,* commanded by Chief A.S.V. Jones, off Happisburgh; the *Francolin* was sunk with the death of one of its crew while the Do 217, again misidentified as a Do 17, was either hit by light anti-aircraft fire or collided with the mast of the 322-ton *Francolin* and crashed into the sea two miles off Happisburgh Lighthouse with the deaths of all four crew.

II./KG 40's last operational loss of the year (and the last Do 217 to be lost on operations in 1941) came on 23 December 1941 when *Lt.* Hans Ungerer of 6./KG 40 failed to return from an unknown mission; the cause is not known.

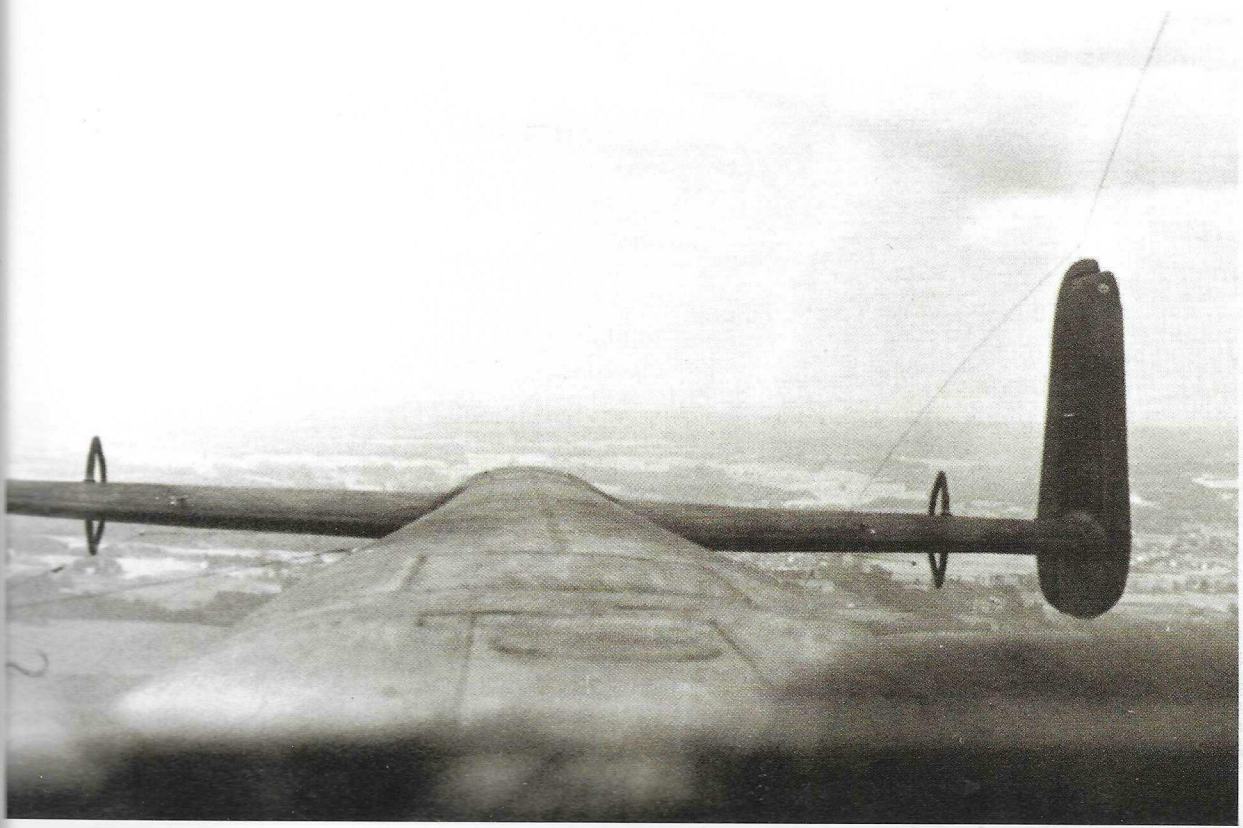
Oblt. Walter Bornschein, of 4./KG 2, who had flown the Do 217 in action for four and a half months, carried out his last operational flight of 1941 on 27 November by which time he had flown 27 missions in the type of which 20 were against ships or mining sorties and the remainder against ports such as Liverpool, Hull, Sunderland and Cardiff.

The final words for 1941 go to *Oblt.* Josef Steudel of 8./KG 2 who had a long association with the Do 17 and would have a similar association with the Do 217 over the next three years. He wrote of the new bomber:

> 'A positive expectant spirit accompanied our training on the Do 217. This aircraft was, at that time, the Luftwaffe's most modern bomber. Its appearance was very similar to the Do 17 but the most apparent difference was that it was no longer as sleek as the Do 17. It had a more voluminous fuselage and could carry 2,000 kg, twice the load of the Do 17. The Do 217 was also very similar in its manoeuvrability. It was much heavier and therefore less agile and yet it was very responsive and easy to fly. Still it must be said that in July 1941, it was still not ready to be deployed to the Front. Many inadequacies were still to be discovered and it required constant changes, improvements and refitting. In all of the years of the war, we were hardly ever at full strength and escalating losses played a major role with this.'

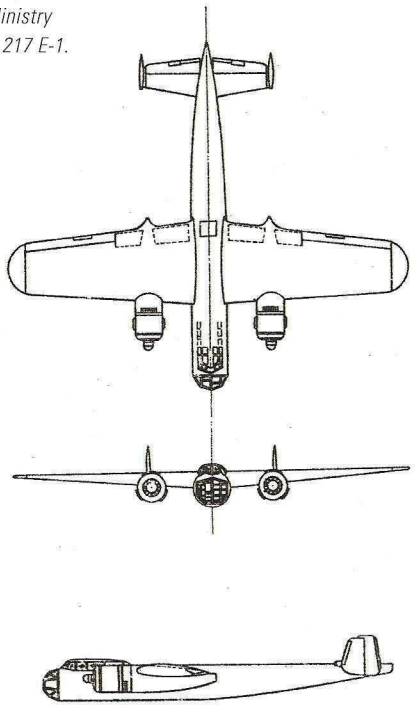
Those inadequacies would come home to haunt the Do 217 crews over the next two and a half years.

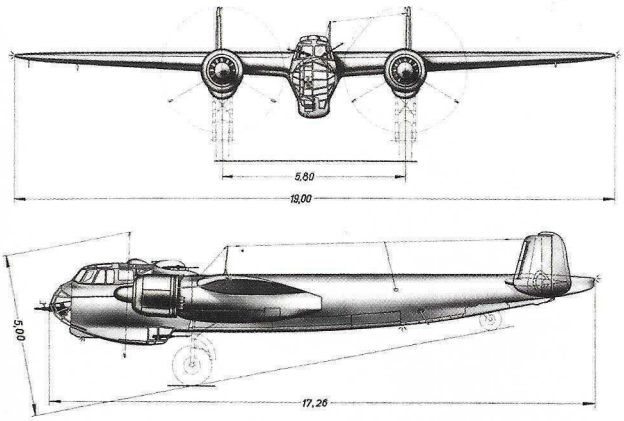
Lt. Josef Steudel of 8./KG 2. He would be awarded the Ehrenpokal, German Cross in Gold and Ritterkreuz and would survive the war.



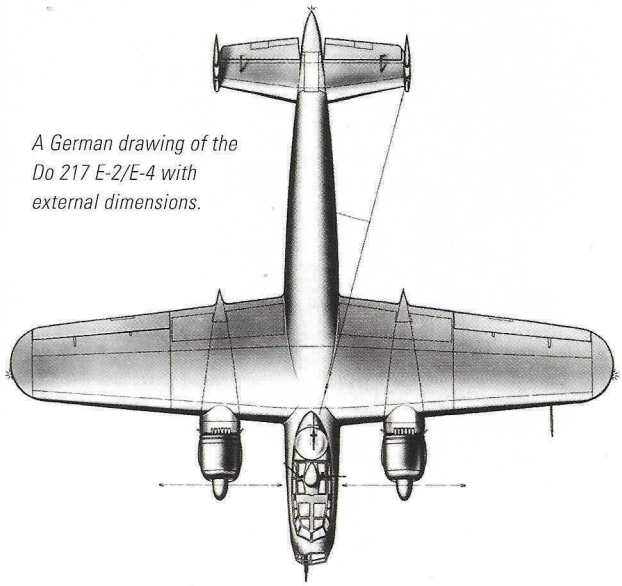
View looking out over the rear fuselage from a Do 217 E-4 dorsal turret.

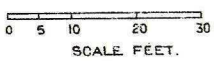
Early British Air Ministry drawing of the Do 217 E-1.





A German drawing of the Do 217 E-2/E-4 with external dimensions.



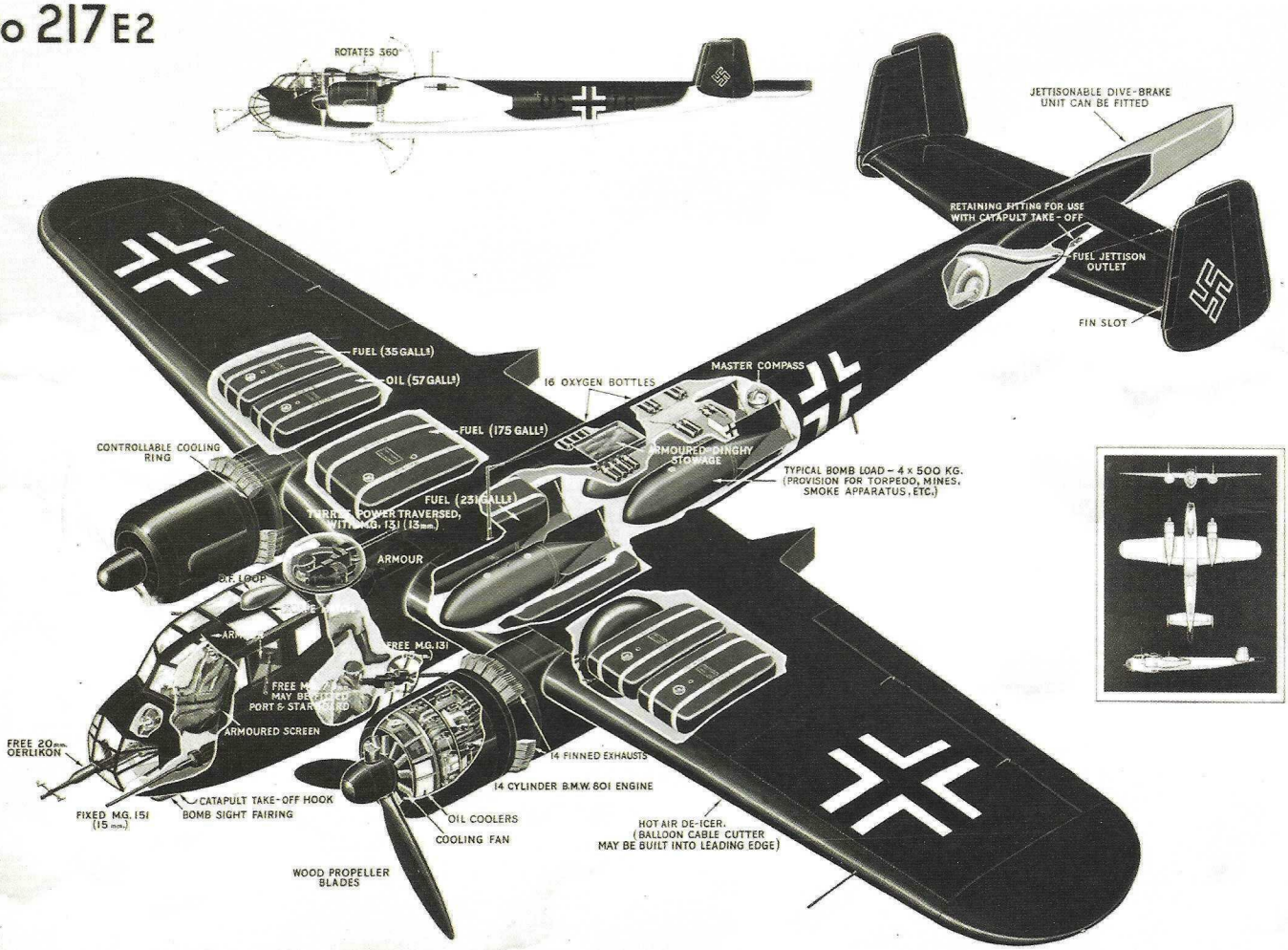


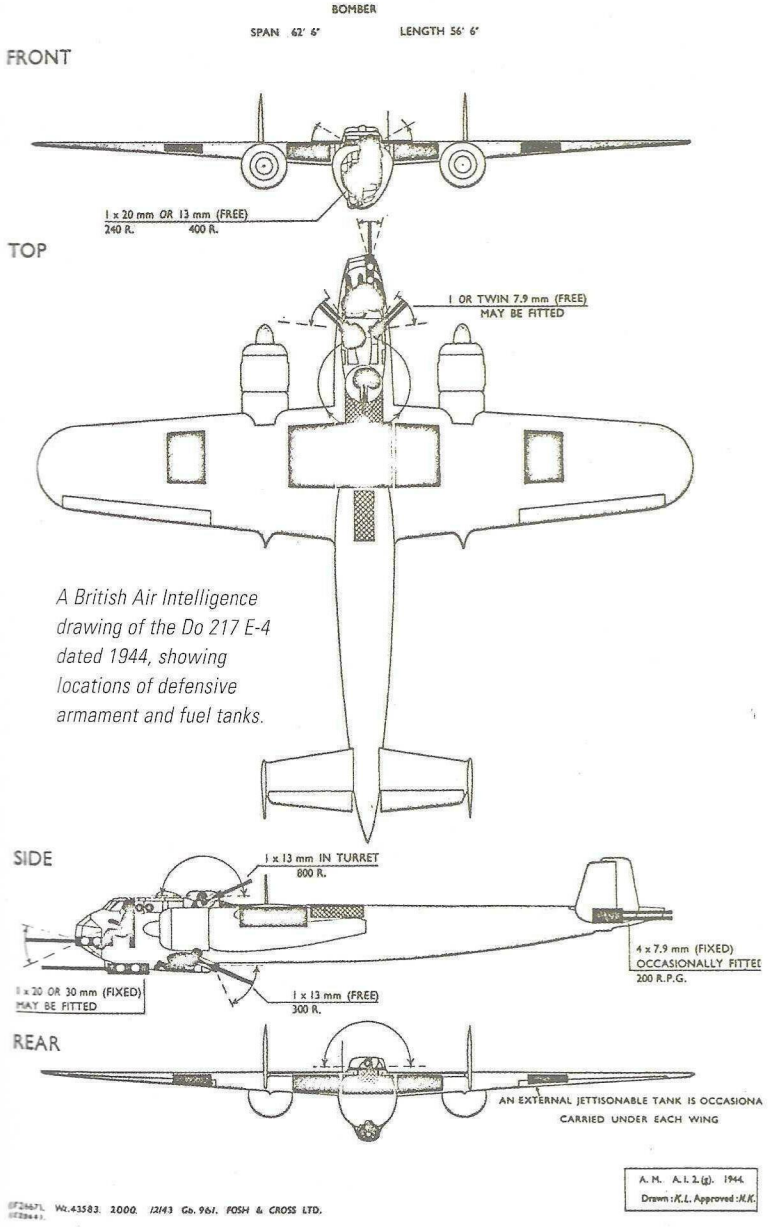
WEIGHT LB. (APPROX).	33,500
GROSS WING AREA. SQ. FT.	610
SPAN.	61·7

DORNIER. 217. E.1.

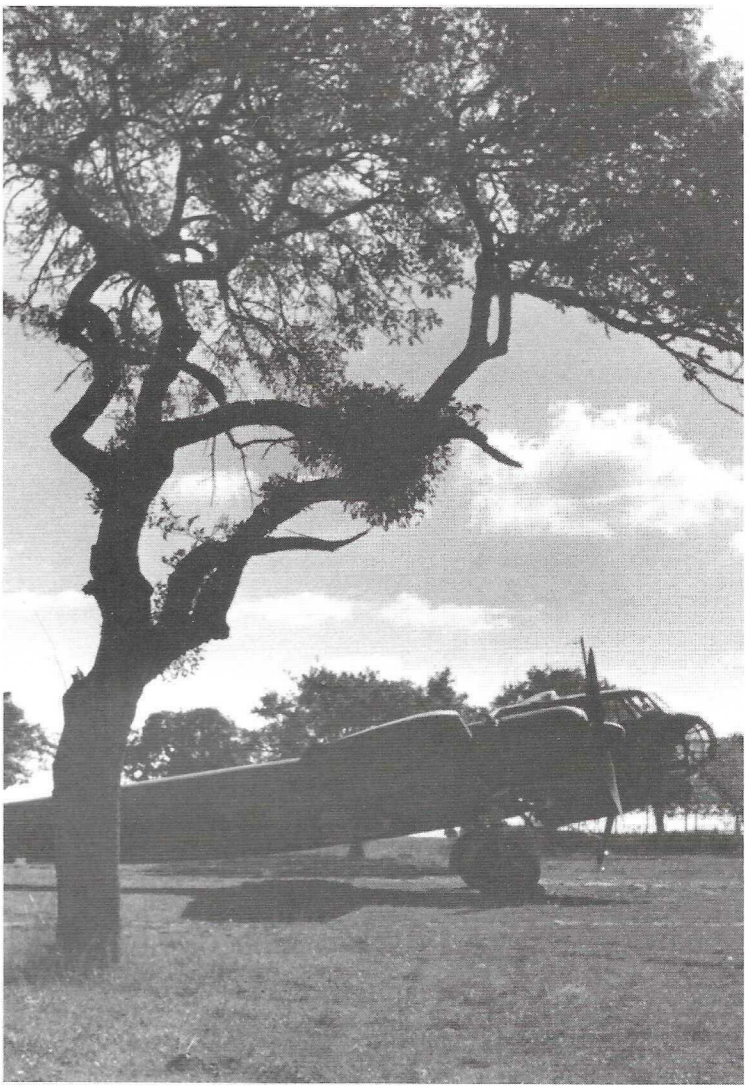
Below: A British Air Ministry cut-away recognition guide for RAF pilots of the Do 217 E-2.

Do 217 E2



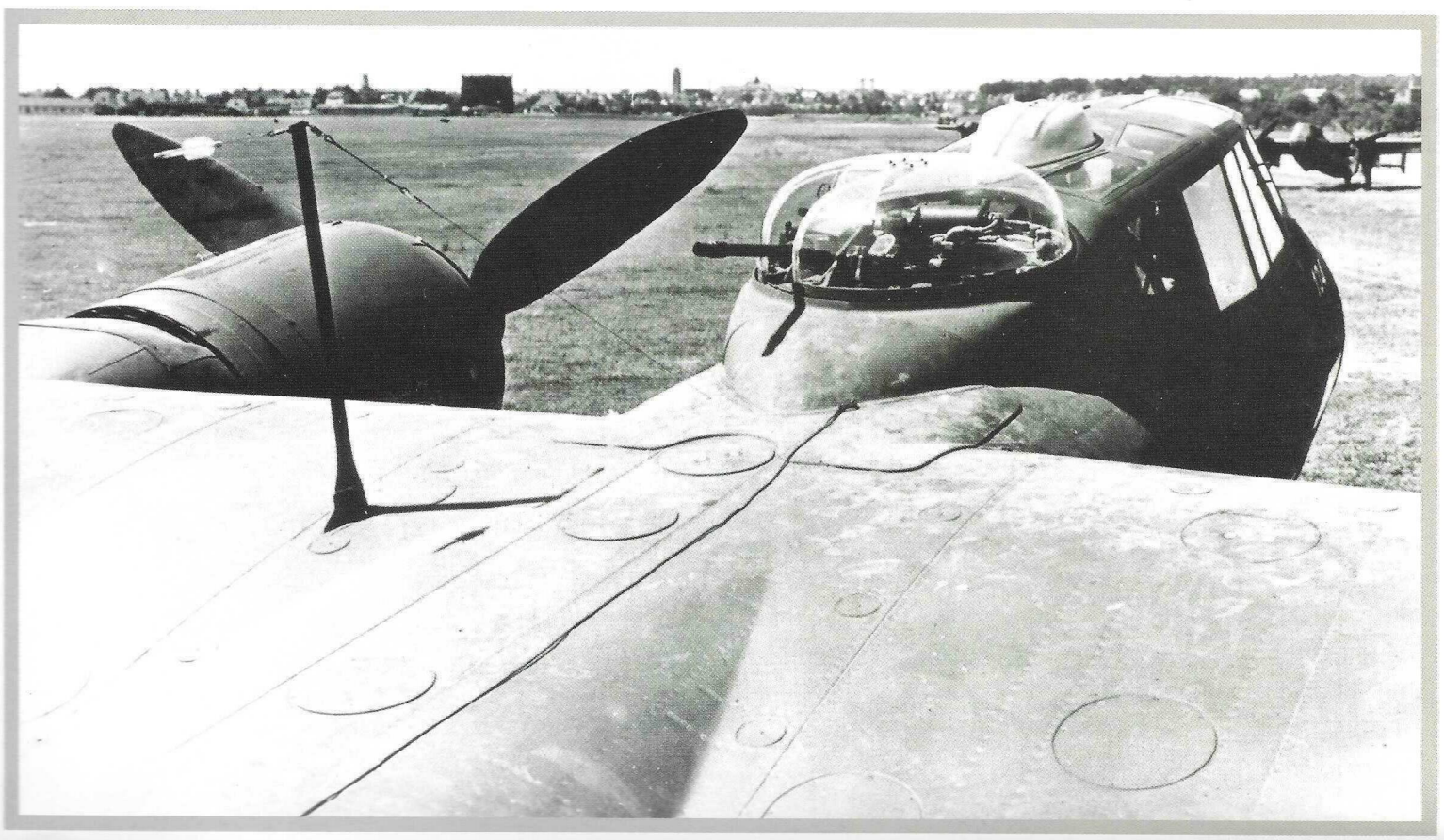


A British Air Intelligence drawing of the Do 217 E-4 dated 1944, showing locations of defensive armament and fuel tanks.



A Do 217 E-1 of II./KG 2, 1941.

Below: A clear view of the Do 217 E-2/E-4 turret and its 13 mm MG 131 gun.



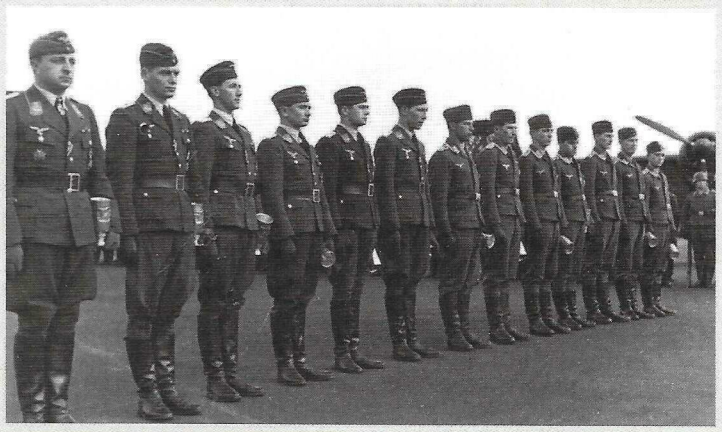
Luftwaffe personnel inspect minor Flak damage to the nose of a Do 217 of II./KG 2, 1941.

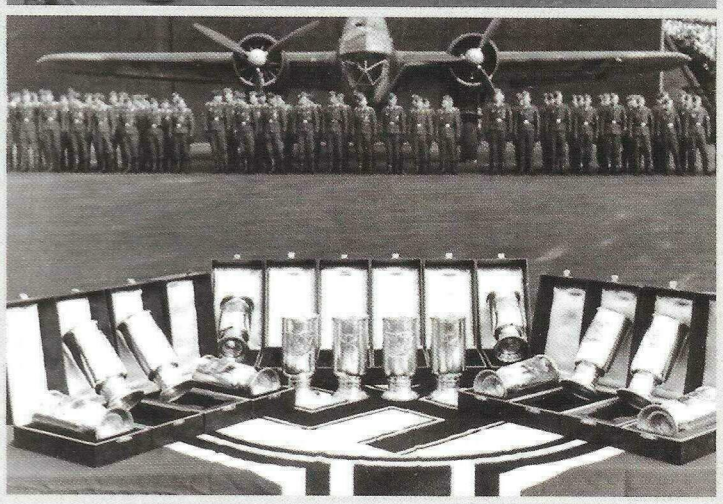
Right: Oblt. Helmut Petraschke (right), Operations Officer of III./KG 2 congratulating Oblt. Josef Steudel, Staffelkapitän of 8./KG 2, on returning from his 150th operational flight, Gilze-Rijen, 7 September 1943. On 2 November 1941, Petraschke, then a Beobachter with 5./KG 2, was wounded by a nightfighter, probably flown by Flt Lt Vernon Motion and Sgt Harry Uezzel of 604 Sqn. Petraschke is wearing the wound badge awarded for that combat alongside the Iron Cross First Class and Beobachter's badge.

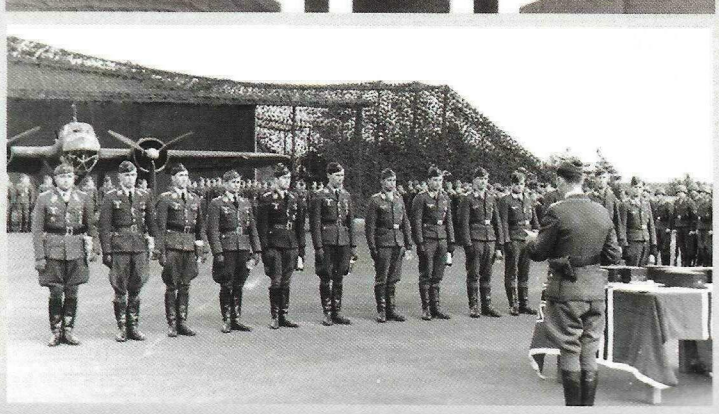
Right: Three photographs of a mass award of the Ehrenpokal to aircrew of III./KG 2 at Achmer, November 1941. At far left is the Staffelkapitän of 9./KG 2, Hptm. Walter Bradel, while Lt. Josef Steudel of 8./KG 2 is 4th from left. III./KG 2 was in the process of converting from the Do 17 to the Do 217, and one of these can be seen in the background in the first photograph.

A Do 217 E probably awaiting delivery to KG 2 or II./KG 40. It is possibly Do 217 E-1, W.Nr. 1044, TC+ZR.

Above: Oblt. Günther Czernik, Staffelkapitän of 6./KG 2, congratulates Ofw. Robert Spies, his Beobachter, on 200 operational flights at Zwölfaxing, Austria in April 1941. Czernik would receive the Ritterkreuz less than a month after this photograph was taken. Both men wear lightweight tan summer flying suits and Spies has the sleeve rank insignia of an Oberfeldwebel. Both were killed on 21 October 1941 when their Do 217 E-2, W.Nr. 1139, U5+AP, suffered engine failure while returning from an attack on Liverpool and crashed north-north-east of Schiphol. It is possible that theirs was the Do 217 damaged by Flt Lt C H Hartley and Sgt W R Croysdill of 604 Sqn between Bath and Ostend at 2300 hrs that night.

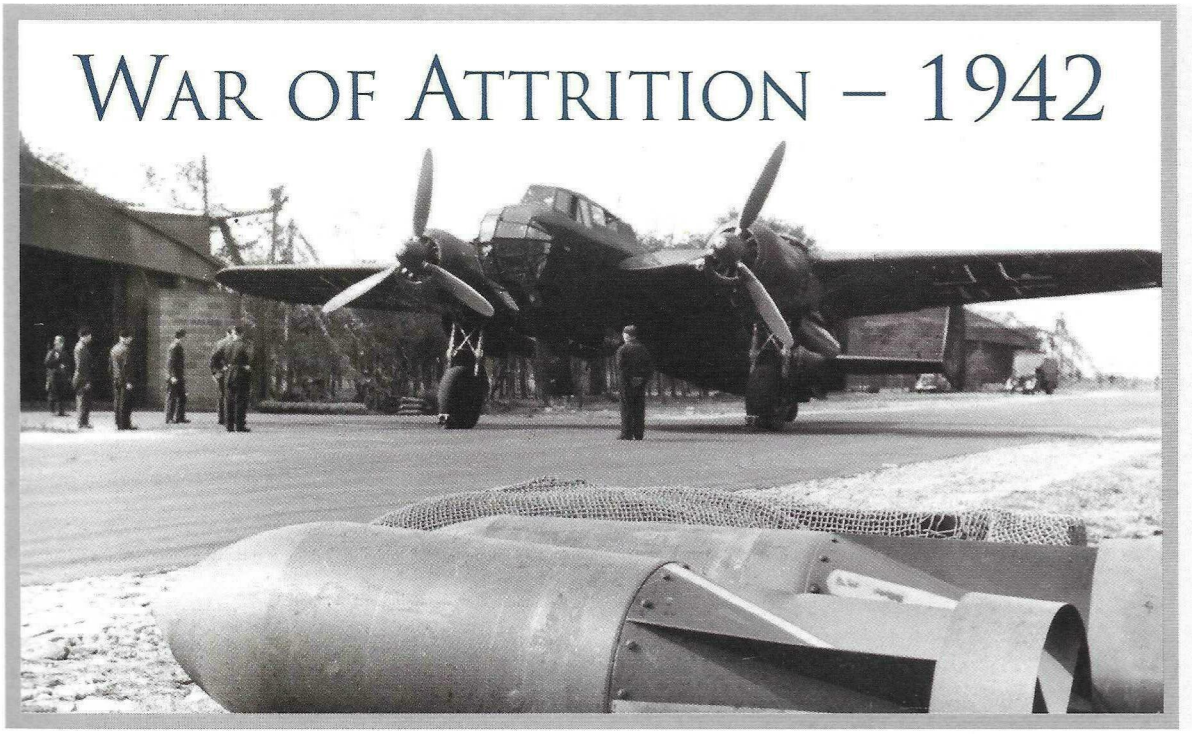






CHAPTER THREE

War of Attrition – 1942



250-kg bombs and, behind, a Do 217 E-4 of II./KG 40.

BY 5 January 1942, III./KG 2, now commanded by *Maj.* Gerhard Klostermann since September the previous year, had arrived at Schiphol after converting to the Do 217 at Achmer. It joined *Maj.* Robert-Heinrich von Groddeck's I./KG 2, *Hptm.* Walter Bradel's II./KG 2 and *Hptm.* Wendt *Freiherr* von Schippenbach's II./KG 40 at Soesterberg, all units then moving to other bases temporarily as dictated by the targets assigned to them. However, operations over the British Isles were different by this point, as *Oblt.* Josef Steudel of 8./KG 2 wrote:

> 'The war had us again. Our targets were the familiar harbour towns on the east, south and west coasts, industrial centres in the Midlands and also convoys. Part of the job was mining the Channel and the mouth of the Thames. What was unfamiliar was the new British defence. Radar-guided nightfighters were making our life difficult and the new technology was seeing rapid improvements and we would suffer severe losses. "Missing in Action" became a standard turn of phrase. During our missions with the Do 17, we could afford to keep flying on a predetermined course. Now anyone who continued flying in this manner was in grave danger of being shot down by nightfighters.'

Due to the increasing effectiveness of British defences, the Do 217 E needed to be improved. The E-3 (an upgraded E-1) and E-4 (based on the E-2) variants had additional armour protection for the crews and changes to defensive weapons and their calibre. The first Do 217 E-3 to be lost on operations was believed to be from 6./KG 40 and flown by *Lt.* Gerhard Westphal who was shot down by Flak attacking Tynemouth on 26 March 1942; the first Do 217 E-4 loss is believed to have been from 5./KG 40: *Lt.* Gerrit Roosen was lost on an anti-shipping mission on 5 February 1942.

Oblt. Josef Steudel (right) receives the Deutsches Kreuz in Gold from Geschwaderkommodore Obstlt. Hans von Koppelow at Arnheim, September 1942. Far left is Maj. Kurt Leythäuser, Gruppenkommandeur of III./KG 2.

Those crews that had recently arrived at Schiphol after conversion training were soon in action. By means of example, *Oblt.* Rolf Häusner and his crew from 7./KG 2 flew their first mission in a Do 217, an armed reconnaissance of the North Sea, on 13 January 1942

Oblt. Rolf Häusner of 7./KG 2. He would be killed on operations in December 1942.

followed by an attack on Whitby on 15 January 1942 and an attack on a convoy off Withernsea on 22 January 1942. This crew had flown their first Do 217 at Achmer on 10 July 1941 and did not arrive at Schiphol, training completed, until 4 January 1942. Having flown 22 missions in the Do 217 between 25 July and 29 December 1941, the crew of *Ofw.* Georg Brendebach of 5./KG 2 flew an attack on Liverpool on 10 January 1942 (Brendebach's 63rd of the war) then dropped mines in the Thames Estuary the following night but then did not fly again until 3 March 1942.

Losses were light, the first occurring in the early hours of 11 January 1942. *Ofw.* Paul Wolf of 5./KG 40 was the pilot of one of 16 aircraft briefed to attack Merseyside. They had managed to drop their bombs with difficulty and turn for home when they were intercepted by a Beaufighter of 456 Sqn flown by Sqn Ldr John Hamilton with Plt Off Den Norris-Smith as his radar operator:

> 'At 0055 hrs given vector onto raid by Hack Green GCI. Flying at 22,000 ft contacted enemy aircraft crossing at right angles at a height of 12,000 ft. Operator gave 90 degree turn and second contact made. Visual then obtained at 150 yds astern and 50 ft below. Pilot fired two bursts and enemy aircraft (Do 217) shot down in flames.'

The Beaufighter had been spotted just before its attack but the pilot took no evasive action. A second attack set the starboard engine on fire and the crew all bailed out, the bomber crashing at Arbury, south-west of Nuneaton, in Warwickshire. Interrogation of the crew revealed very little as they were very security conscious and had a high morale. The most experienced member of the crew was *Ofw.* Herbert Leppin (flight engineer) who had flown with the *Legion Condor* in Spain and had then flown over forty operational flights with KG 4 before transferring to II./KG 40. The pilot, *Ofw.* Paul Wolf, was a former member of 2./KG 40 flying the Fw 200 and had moved to 5./KG 40 on its formation, finishing training on the Do 217 around 23 July 1941. Flying then from Soesterberg, Leppin and Wolf admitted that all but two of their missions had been against shipping or minelaying and that this sortie was only the second time that they had flown over mainland Britain.

Losses for the remainder of January 1942 were light. *Fw.* Joachim Lehnis and his crew from 8./KG 2 were lost on the evening of 14 January 1942. Engaged on yet another armed reconnaissance along the east coast of England, it is possible that they attacked and damaged the SS *Empire Bay* off Middlesbrough only to then head inland. They dropped two bombs on Skinningrove Ironworks, injuring 11 workers and causing damage which resulted in a loss of production. They then dropped a single bomb causing slight damage to a railway line, after which disaster struck. The Do 217 E-2 collided with a barrage balloon cable flying at 4,000 ft over the North Tees jetties, which severed nine feet off the starboard wing. Witnesses on the ground saw a yellow flash after which the engine note changed. Out of control, the bomber came low over the rooftops and plunged at high speed into railway goods yards alongside a coal depot at Clay Lane, South Bank, Middlesbrough. It exploded killing all four crew instantly. The aircraft was almost entirely buried in a crater 20 ft across and 10 ft deep which quickly filled with water. There was very little wreckage above ground and as the railway line was needed for war work, the hole was filled in and the track quickly repaired. Three badly mutilated bodies were recovered, however, and buried at Thornaby but that which was thought to be *Uffz.* Hans Manecke, the radio operator, was not found. However, in November 1997, workers laying sewers uncovered the wreckage of the Do 217 and while clearing the aircraft remains, a body was discovered which turned out to be that of *Ofw.* Heinz Richter, the flight engineer. As a result, the grave marker of Heinrich Richter was changed to that of Hans Manecke and Richter was buried alongside his crew in a new grave in October 1998.

The 15 January 1942 would be a bad day for the Do 217. *Lt.* Karl Dern and his crew of 6./KG 40 radioed that they had lost an engine and were returning but they never arrived home, while *Ofw.* Ludwig Ehle and his crew were killed taking off from Soesterberg. These were the last two losses for II./KG 40 for this month but not so for KG 2. On 17 January 1942, *Fw.* Otto Thomas of 8./KG 2 was shot down while attacking a convoy off Clacton by gunners on HMS *Walpole* and a Havoc Mk II of 85 Sqn – which was a first for this RAF aircraft type – flown by Plt Off Hugh Norsworthy; his combat report explains what happened:

> 'We immediately went into cloud and on coming out at 2,500 ft sighted an aircraft at 1½-2 miles ahead on approximately the same course moving slightly to port. "Tally Ho" was given at 1734 hrs. After a minute, the aircraft pulled up and at 1740 hrs with three bursts of cannon fire, destroyed a Harwich balloon. We climbed up after him and were engaged with cannon fire from the rear dorsal turret. I then identified the aircraft as a Dornier. Havoc was slowly overtaking when e/a did a medium diving turn to starboard to cloud cover. Havoc turned inside the e/a in a shallow dive and opened fire with a five second burst at 500 yds. I closed to 200 yds firing intermittent bursts finishing with all I could give him until he went into clouds. For a few seconds before cloud cover was reached, e/a was seen to emit dark smoke from between the fuselage and starboard engine and I was able to note that the tail of the fuselage projected beyond the tailplane. From this, his speed and his dorsal cannon, I concluded that he must have been a Do 217.'

The final two losses for the first month of 1942 were on the night of 21 January 1942 on yet another operation off the east coast. After taking off at 2020 hrs, *Oblt.* Helmuth Lau of 4./KG 2 is believed to have suffered engine failure on a mission to the Thames Estuary while *Lt.* Wilhelm Pawel of 7./KG 2 is believed to have been hit by Flak and crashed in the sea east of Cromer. Lau, who had flown with 8./KG 2 over the Soviet Union, had only finished converting to the Do 217 eight days previously.

A Flight, 85 Sqn, RAF Hunsdon, summer 1942 in front of a Douglas Havoc NF Mk II, possibly VY-V, AH438. Plt Off Hugh Norsworthy who claimed a Do 217 on 17 January 1942 is back row, far right.

If January 1942 had been quiet, February would be much busier, helped in part by 'Operation *Donnerkeil*' on 12 February (or the 'Channel Dash' as it became known), when the German warships *Gneisenau*, *Scharnhorst* and *Prinz Eugen* escaped from Brest through the Channel back to Germany.

The first loss of the month came on 2 February when two Do 217s of 6./KG 40 were reported attacking a convoy off Cromer. 19 Sqn scrambled two Spitfires from RAF Ludham which were flown by Plt Off Maurice Devereux and Plt Off Jack Henderson. A game of cat and mouse, in and out of cloud, followed during which time both the Do 217s, as well as the Spitfires, separated from each other, but it was Henderson who had the luck when *Oblt.* Ernst Eckert's bomber appeared out of cloud into a patch of blue sky. He immediately turned in behind and fired a burst of six seconds with no visible effect but then:

> 'Blue 2 attacked again from the port quarter and fired another long burst with cannon and machine gun from 300-200 yds. As a result, things immediately started to happen. The port engine caught fire and as Blue 2 continued with his attack, pieces flew off the port engine and a second fire started in either the rear cockpit or the starboard engine. He saw the port engine well alight and small flickering flames coming from the starboard engine. Thin black smoke was issuing from both engines and pieces were still flying off the aircraft. Two of the crew were seen to bail out and the enemy aircraft was last seen to be gliding down towards the sea in a gentle right-hand turn through the cloud.'

Although *Ofw.* Gustav Borkowski (observer) was picked up alive, he later died of exposure, while neither RAF pilot would survive 1942. Maurice Devereux would be killed in an accident on 19 February 1942 while Jack Henderson, who was with 234 Sqn at the time and had been promoted to Flight Lieutenant and awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, was shot down and killed on 22 December 1942 by a Fw 190 flown by *Uffz.* Helmut Becker of 8./JG 2.

Three days later it was a repeat performance, this time by 5./KG 40. *Lt.* Gerrit Roosen and his crew failed to return on an anti-shipping mission on the afternoon of 5 February 1942. A convoy 20 miles east of Spurn Head reported being under attack and two Spitfires of 133 (Eagle) Sqn, flown by Flt Lt Hugh Johnson and Plt Off Marion Jackson, and two Hurricanes from 253 Sqn, flown by Plt Off Peter Landers and Sgt John Tate, engaged in another cat and mouse series of combats. Although they did not see the Do 217 crash, the destroyer HMS *Mendip* reported observing an aircraft of that type crash into the sea.

Lt. Roosen's loss would be the last for II./KG 40 for nearly two months as the *Gruppe* was detached to Grosseto in Italy for most of March 1942 to be trained in dropping torpedoes – something that had begun in November 1941, *Staffel* by *Staffel*. Despite all the intention, effort and training, II./KG 40 never performed this role.

* * *

The air war was therefore left to KG 2 which now took its operations further west. *Oblt.* Rolf Häusner of 7./KG 2 recorded moving from Schiphol to Evreux on 7 February 1942 to fly just one mission – a nuisance attack on Exmouth on 12 February, the day of the Channel Dash, returning to Schiphol the following day. Häusner took off at 0734 hrs and landed at 1010 hrs (German time).British records acknowledge that Exmouth was attacked just after 0800 hrs when three bombs were dropped, one of which

Oblt. Helmuth Lau, 4./KG 2, missing in action 21-22 January 1942.

The pilot of the Do 217 E-4 of 7./KG 2 which crashed at RAF Exeter on 12 February 1942 – Uffz. Rolf Güldenpfennig. (via Irwin)

The experienced Bordfunker, Fw. Hermann Drame, killed in the same crash on 12 February 1942. (via Irwin)

exploded in Bicton Place killing five and injuring another seven.

Another nine aircraft attacked RAF Warmwell and Torquay and three Do 217s carried out a low-level attack on RAF Exeter. One of these, a Do 217 E-4 of 7./KG 2 flown by *Uffz.* Rolf Güldenpfennig approached at 100 ft from the south-west, dropping three bombs on the north of the airfield but then the bomber was hit by light anti-aircraft fire from the ground defences. It collided with a tree, the port wing tip was ripped off and the aircraft hit the ground at a shallow angle, disintegrating over a wide area. Not surprisingly the crew were all killed. Four hours later, two Do 217 E-4s of 9./KG 2 collided mid-Channel north-east of Cherbourg after one of them suffered an engine failure. They would have been behind the German warships and they were from a formation of 15 aircraft believed to be trying to draw away British fighters and distract attention towards Brest; there were no survivors from *Oblt.* Hermann Ruess and *Uffz.* Helmuth Meier's crews. Finally, at 1700 hrs German time, a Do 217 apparently dropped bombs on the destroyer *Hermann Schoemann* but missed. KG 2 was known to be active that afternoon, during which time the Do 217 E-4 flown by *Lt.* Valentin Wagner of 5./KG 2 was damaged by Flak and he returned with a wounded observer. At some stage during the day, the Do 217 flown by *Lt.* Hans Padell of 4./KG 2 crashed on landing at Achmer due to combat damage.

Three days later an attack on Newcastle would see the loss of a Do 217 carrying the most senior officer flying in a Do 217 to be killed to date. Thirty-two-year-old *Maj.* Helmut Klostermann was an experienced pre-war fighter and ground attack pilot, but his operational flying with KG 2 only began in May 1941. Flying the night of 15 February 1942 with *Lt.* Konrad Pellar as his pilot, both Klostermann's aircraft and another from 9./KG 2, flown by *Uffz.* Emil Aster, failed to return and were assumed to have been lost to either Flak or nightfighters. One claim was submitted by Fg Off James 'Ben' Benson and his radar operator, Sgt Lewis Brandon, of 141 Sqn who damaged a Do 217 east of Blyth at 1950 hrs. This was later upgraded to 'destroyed' as the local Observer Corps and staff at

Below: Oblt. Franz Schönberger, the Operations Officer of III./KG 2 October 1941-August 1942, stands behind Obstlt. Hans von Koppelow, the Gruppenkommandeur of III./KG 2 16 February-30 April 1942, handing out Iron Crosses First Class to NCO aircrew of III./KG 2.

Fg Off Yvan du Monceau of 609 Sqn.

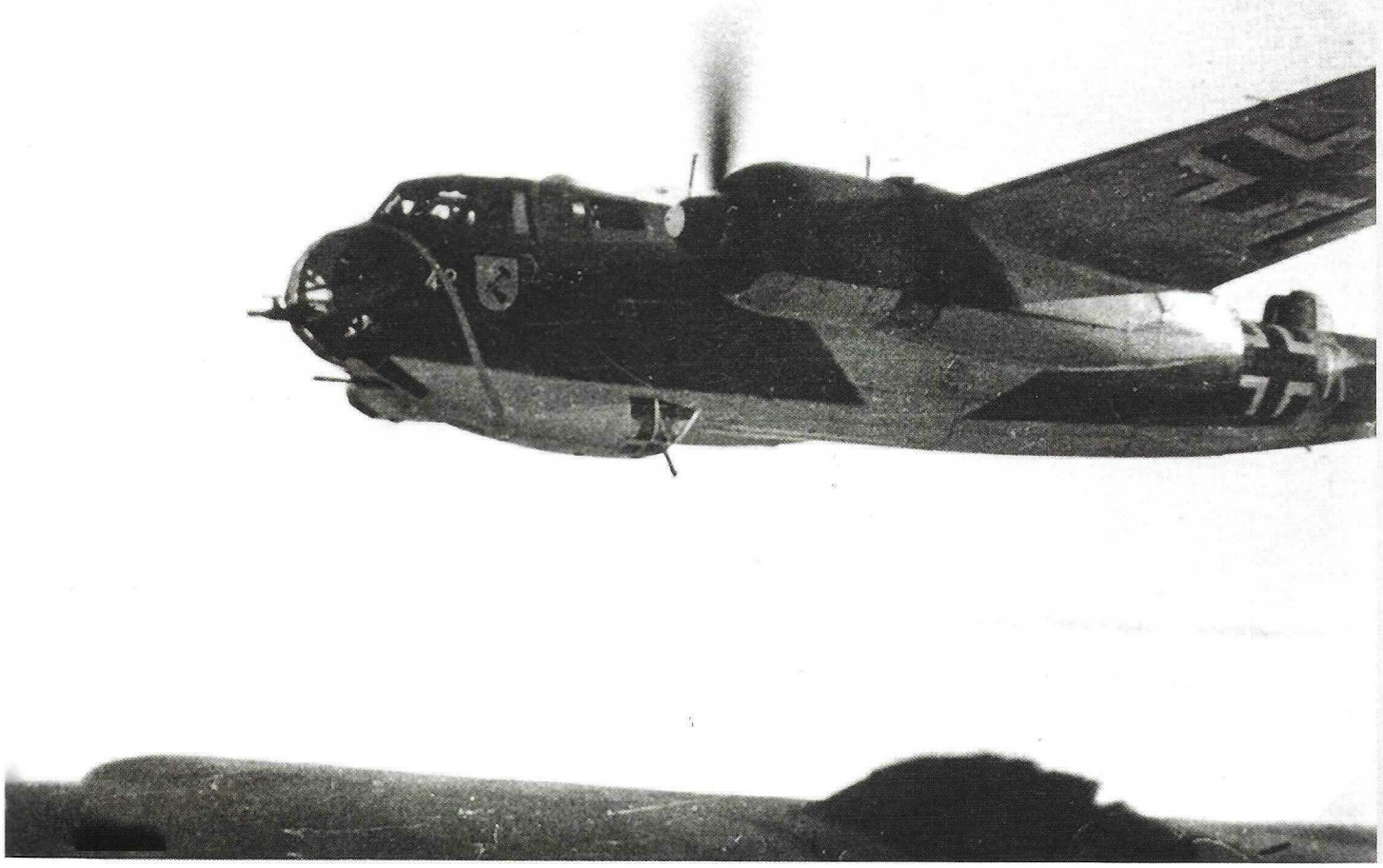
St. Mary's Lighthouse at Whitley Bay reported that an aircraft had crashed into the sea four miles east of Blyth at 2006 hrs. No bodies from either crash were ever recovered. Klostermann was replaced by *Obstlt.* Hans von Koppelow who then took command of KG 2 at the start of May 1942.

KG 2 would suffer another four aircraft lost in action off the east coast during the remainder of February 1942. On the afternoon of 18 February, *Lt.* Erich Palm of 7./KG 2 failed to return from attacking a convoy in the Humber Estuary and a clue to what happened was given by *Uffz.* Karl Laub of 9./KG 2 who managed to return to Schiphol after being attacked by Spitfires. At 1313 hrs, two sections of two Spitfires from 609 Sqn lifted off from RAF Digby in Lincolnshire flown by Fg Off 'Joe' Atkinson and Sgt 'Moose' Evans (Red Section), and Fg Off Yvan du Monceau and Fg Off 'Balbo' Roeland (Blue Section). They headed for the convoy.

> 'Convoy reported bandit 3 o'clock at 600 ft. Turned towards bandit just in time to see it disappear into cloud about 700 yds away. Told Blue 2 to patrol rear of convoy while I searched above clouds for bandit. Above cloud made a very tight turn which rendered my Sperry instrument u/s. Came down through clouds steering due east. A few moments after I got below cloud and while I was turning left a Dornier appeared diving from the clouds about 700 yds from me flying westward. I immediately used full throttle and turned inside him as fast as I could. I was then about 8 o'clock from him slightly above skimming base of clouds. As I had a good speed I closed in rather rapidly and about 500 yds away began to aim. At this moment e/a levelled out probably having sighted me. I gave a burst about two seconds long. Meanwhile e/a had started climbing and from the moment I fired he made a 45° and rapid dash for the clouds. E/a was very fast. Just before he reached cloud cover, I was almost dead astern and I could see black smoke pouring from his port engine and some sort of brilliant spray emitted by his starboard engine. Then I lost him.'

Meanwhile Red Section was damaging another Do 217 while Wg Cdr Peter Blatchford (the Digby Wing Leader) and Plt Off Christian Ortmans then claimed to have damaged one more.

At 0720 hrs on the morning of 24 February, 5./KG 2 sent out an aircraft on armed reconnaissance to The Wash on the Cambridgeshire coast. Based on its reports, at 1215 hrs Do 217s from III./KG2 went out to attack a convoy, but worsening weather forced the mission to be curtailed. Another attempt was made during the evening



Do 217 E-4, W.Nr. 5342, U5+KR, of 7./KG 2. This aircraft was probably shot down by Fg Off Yvan du Monceau of 609 Sqn on 18 February 1942.

and as a result two large freighters were badly damaged off Cromer. The aircraft of *Fw.* Heinz-Wulf Krabbenhöft of 8./KG 2 received damage to one engine, but Krabbenhöft managed a smooth landing back at Schiphol.

However, the Do 217 flown by *Lt.* Ewald Jasper of 7./KG 2 is thought to have been lost to ships' Flak while attacking the convoy off Cromer. He was probably shot down by Plt Off Ron Dawson flying a Spitfire of 266 Sqn 15 miles north-east of Happisburgh at 1920 hrs.

> 'At 1915 hrs, when flying north-west over the convoy, White Section (Plt Off R H L Dawson and Sgt J R Macnamara) sighted four to six Dorniers approaching the convoy from the east at low level in line abreast, the nearest Dornier being about 200 yds ahead of Plt Off Dawson. The convoy opened fire and bomb bursts were observed around the convoy. Plt Off Dawson chased after the nearest e/a which turned off north-east at low level. He caught up with e/a and fired two short bursts of cannon and machine gun from 250 yds astern. No hits observed. Lower rear gunner of e/a immediately gave a short burst of return fire (Plt Off Dawson noting a steady stream of tracer). He then gave another burst aiming a little higher than previously and at once there was a large explosion from e/a's port engine which began to burn fiercely. He fired all the rest of his ammunition at e/a. The flames spread rapidly inboard of the port engine and then along the fuselage. Plt Off Dawson followed e/a which climbed up to 1,000 ft but had slowed down to 180 mph. E/a heeled over to port and dived in flames into the sea leaving a wide area of burning petrol and wreckage.'

The crash was witnessed by a Beaufighter flown by Plt Off Geoff Humes of 255 Sqn and the crew of the Hunt-class destroyer HMS *Pytchley*. On landing back at RAF Coltishall, it was found that the guns from the convoy had put a hole in the tail of Ron Dawson's Spitfire. The attack was by four aircraft led by *Lt.* Ekkehard Radlach and two other Do 217s suffered damage – *Ofw.* Karl Engstler's aircraft of 1./KG 2 collided with a barrage balloon cable with minimal damage and Radlach's aircraft had an engine set on fire by Flak but returned safely to Schiphol.

Next *Lt.* Josef Scharnbacher of 9./KG 2 failed to return from minelaying in the Humber Estuary on the night of 26 February 1942 and finally *Uffz.* Helmut Günther of 8./KG 2 was thought to have fallen victim to Flak on a mission to the Humber Estuary on the night of 27 February. Some records suggest that he was shot down by Flt Lt Fred McGevor DFM of 255 Sqn who himself was shot down and killed in the combat, but it is now believed that McGevor was killed 24 hours later; whom he fought with is not known.

February 1942 had seen the most Do 217s available for operations so far and the most losses to date but, from now on, things would change in many ways. Surviving logbooks for March 1942 show little let-up in the pace of operations. *Fw.* Georg Brendebach's of 5./KG 2 shows that he flew a total of 14 missions that month, all but two (attacks on Weymouth and Dover) being against ships, mining or cities on the east coast. One of particular interest saw him fly to Rennes on 28 March in direct response to the British commando raid on the dry dock at Sainte-Nazaire. *Oblt.* Rolf Häusner of 7./KG 2 flew just five east coast/mining/anti-shipping missions while *Lt.* Gerhard Blaschke of 5./KG 2 flew just one mining mission to the Thames before heading to Cognac where, for the rest of the month, he was carrying out training. II./KG 40 was involved in sending aircraft in response to the Sainte-Nazaire raid as by then they had all returned from Grossetto, and the only Do 217 combat loss for both units for March 1942 came on the night of 26 March, *Lt.* Gerhard Westphal and his crew from 6./KG 40 were shot down by Flak off Tynemouth. Westphal's body was found in the sea four days later 25 miles north-east of Tynemouth.

With Do 217 units back to full strength, April 1942 would prove to be a demanding month for the four Do 217 *Gruppen* thanks to the start of what was referred to as the 'Baedeker Blitz'. On the night of 28-29 March, the RAF attacked the city of Lübeck assessing that 190 acres of the old town were destroyed. German records state that 1,425 buildings were destroyed, 1,976 seriously damaged and 8,411 lightly damaged. Then, on the night of 23-24 April 1942, Rostock was similarly attacked. Both cities were former Hanseatic ports, and both comprised mainly old and historic buildings, the bombing of which infuriated Adolf Hitler who, on 14 April, was responsible for the following signal which was sent to the Luftwaffe:

> 'The *Führer* has ordered that the air war against England is to be given a more aggressive stamp. Accordingly when targets are being selected, preference is to be given to those where attacks are likely to have the greatest possible effect on civilian life. Besides raids on ports and industry, terror attacks of a retaliatory nature are to be carried out against towns other than London...'

The first retaliatory attack came on the night of 23-24 April 1942 when 48 Do 217s from KG 2 and possibly II./KG 40, and 12 Ju 88s from the maritime bomber unit *Kampfgruppe* 106 (KGr. 106) attacked Exeter after Baron Gustav Baron von Sturm Braun, a spokesman for the German Foreign Office, stated:

> 'We shall go out and bomb every building in Britain marked with three stars in the Baedeker Guide.'

However, in the three weeks before the start of these attacks, KG 2 and II./KG 40 were still active attacking maritime targets. By means of example, *Fw.* Georg Brendebach of 5./KG 2 remained in Rennes, attacking Portland on the night of 2 April 1942 before returning to Soesterberg on 7 April, after which he carried out eight missions either dropping mines or attacking harbours and ports. KG 2 would lose two aircraft operating against maritime targets before the attack on Exeter. *Uffz.* Fritz Meyer of 8./KG 2 was shot down into the Thames Estuary on the night of 5 April 1942 by Fg Off Derrick Ryalls of the Fighter Interception Unit, while *Oblt.* Arnold Goosemann of 7./KG 2 was believed to have been shot down off Cromer on the night of 7 April by Sqn Ldr Richard Trousdale of 409 Sqn. However, Trousdale's victim could have been the Do 217 E-4 of *Stab* II./KG 40 flown by *Gruppenkommandeur Hptm.* Wendt *Freiherr* von Schippenbach who failed to return from the same attack on Grimsby. Von Schippenbach, who would be awarded the *Deutsches Kreuz in Gold* posthumously the following month, would be replaced by *Hptm.* Waldemar Höner *zu* Drewer but his time in command lasted just two and a half months. 4./KG 40 also lost *Fw.* Hans Schiff on 6 April 1942 and *Lt.* Edgar Scheidhauer from 6./KG 40 on 11 April on operations over the North Sea; the reasons for both losses are not known.

The first 'Baedeker' attack against Exeter was ineffective. The sky was overcast and, as a result, bombs were scattered mainly to the west of Exeter. Just one aircraft dropped its bombs on the city, approaching from the south at 9,000 ft and releasing four 500 kg bombs at 2330 hrs which fractured gas and water mains and damaged about 200 houses. The Luftwaffe confirmed that one crew reported to have bombed the city; five inhabitants were killed and eight injured. The Luftwaffe lost one aircraft flown by *Oblt. Dr.* Kurt Gumbart who was leading 5./KG 2, the RAF pilot responsible being Fg Off John Tharp flying a Beaufighter of 604 Sqn, whose report reads as follows:

> '... A silhouette was seen against a dark starry sky. Beaufighter closed in, saw three exhaust flames, flew underneath enemy aircraft and recognised it as a Do 217. Beaufighter drew back and opened fire from slightly below and dead astern...Flame appeared in the port engine and Beaufighter turned away to right and then back to watch enemy aircraft which went vertically down enveloped in flame the whole length of the fuselage. It passed through cloud and then a brilliant flash lit up the sky from below...'

The following night 57 aircraft returned to Exeter attacking in two waves from 0009 to 0155 hrs and from 0304 to 0312 hrs; this time the attack was more effective. Some 6,000 houses suffered damage of varying degrees, the gas and water pressure was reduced due to damage to the mains and four factories were damaged slightly. However, 73 civilians were killed and another 54 injured. No claims were made by the RAF and not a single German aircraft was lost or damaged. It would be different in the nights that followed.

Again as a result of the attack on Rostock, on the night of 25-26 April 1942, a major attack in two waves was mounted against Bath. In addition to the usual aircraft of *Luftflotte* 3, a number of aircraft from various IV. *Gruppen* (the training *Gruppe* of each *Geschwader*) were involved, with both experienced and inexperienced crews. Around 80 aircraft took part and the damage was heavy. Two hundred and fifty houses were destroyed with another 5,000 damaged and seven factories were hit, five of them badly damaged. Amongst those buildings hit were an electricity power station and a gasworks. Communications were badly affected by a direct hit on the city control room and damage to telephone cables hampered communication with Bristol, this city also being attacked but only suffering 700 houses damaged.

The Luftwaffe did not get away scot-free, but the only Do 217 lost came from 5./KG 40, flown by *Fw.* Herbert Gergs. It crashed on its second sortie of the night at Handley Cross in Dorset, Gergs apparently having been dazzled by a searchlight which caused him to fly into the ground, thereby killing him and his crew.

The Luftwaffe visited Bath again the following night but with less intensity. The attack saw further damage to residential property and the main railway station, as well as the Horstman Gear Co Ltd Newbridge Works which had been damaged the night before. Both nights saw a total of 413 civilians killed and another 357 injured.

RAF claims that night were a He 111 and a Ju 88 probably destroyed and three Do 217s, a Ju 88 and a He 111 damaged. Losses were a Do 17 of 10./KG 2 while a He 111 from IV./KG 4 and another from IV./KG 55 were damaged.

If the RAF was expecting another attack in the West Country, they were to be proved wrong as that afternoon II./KG 2 moved from Evreux to Soesterberg and III./KG 2 moved from Caen to Schiphol in order to attack Norwich. Seventy-one aircraft assisted by He 111 pathfinders of *Erprobungs- und Lehrkommando*/KG 100 (Erpr.Kdo./KG 100) caught the RAF napping as no interceptions were made and no German aircraft were lost

in combat. Damage was mainly restricted to the poorer residential area of the city and utility services were only slightly affected. However, the main railway station was burnt out and damage was caused to one factory and the BBC buildings at Chapel Field. Sadly, 162 civilians were killed and another 600 wounded.

Testing the British defences the night of 28 April 1942 saw York as the target with 74 aircraft from KG 2, II./KG 40, KGr. 106, IV./KG 30, IV./KG 77 and Erpr.Kdo./KG 100 taking part. The attack caused considerable damage to this ancient city with a large fire at the railway station and severe damage to the telephone network. Seventy-nine civilians were killed and a further 205 suffered varying degrees of injury.

The nightfighters were prepared this time, claiming two Do 217s destroyed, two Ju 88s destroyed, two He 111s probably destroyed and two Do 217s damaged. The only matched claim was from 6./KG 2, an aircraft flown by *Lt.* Karl-Heinz Mühlen, shot down by Fg Off Dennis Furse of 406 Sqn. The German pilot relates what happened:

> '... suddenly all hell is let loose. Our brave bird trembles under the cannon and machine gun fire of a fighter. The cabin is full of acrid smoke. My composure vanishes immediately. While the bullets strike us, I bank hard right – the fumes disappear. I dive the machine – my *Bordmechaniker* dangles his left hand in front of me – it is attached to his arm only by shattered skin and bone. I motion to my *Beobachter* to look out for a second attack but he does not understand and our poor bird receives its death blow. I press back against the armour plating. The machine is shuddering and holes appear in the fuselage and the canopy beside me looks like a sieve. The port engine has stopped, the propeller windmilling in the slipstream.
>
> 'Hoping that no vital structural damage has occurred, I bank hard to port and dive steeply to avoid my attacker. Behind me I see the coast in the moonlight and I start to pull out of my dive at 600 m. I appear to have some elevator control but as I pull back the control column it comes back into my stomach and we are still diving. I put on full right aileron but the aircraft still banks to port. "Bail out!" I scream. The altimeter reads 150 m – "Stay in!" We are still turning left in a narrow, treeless valley. The cockpit hits the ground, then bounces high, it slides then digs into the earth. The cockpit is partially crushed and I am hanging on my harness. Suddenly there is a terrific explosion from the main fuel tank. The flash lights up everything like daylight, the frightening second is over and finished...'

The night saw a rare air combat success for a Do 217 when Plt Off Eric Doorly of 133 Sqn was forced to bail out of his Spitfire six miles south-west of RAF Church Fenton when hit by return fire from the Do 217 he was attacking.

The following night it was back to Norwich with 70 aircraft. Wg Cdr Peter Prosser Hanks, the Duxford Wing Leader, got airborne in a Spitfire, claiming two Do 217s probably destroyed and one damaged; just one Do 217 was damaged from *Stab.*/KG 2 which returned with two dead crew. On the ground, Norwich was badly hit with considerable damage to commercial buildings and residential property. The railway goods station was damaged, the lines to Cambridge broken, the gasworks were damaged with one gasholder destroyed and with the waterworks control room destroyed, the water supply to the city centre failed. As a result of this and the previous raid, some 14,000 homes were damaged of which 1,200 were wrecked.

The night of 30 April/1 May 1942 saw a change from Baedeker attacks when 75 aircraft attacked Sunderland and Tyneside. Damage was minimal but the RAF was ready, if not optimistic, claiming four He 111s destroyed, two Do 217s destroyed and a Ju 88 destroyed as well as another five aircraft damaged. German losses were four Ju 88s and a He 111 of Erpr.Kdo./KG 100 which landed back at Ostend with a dead crewman.

The Luftwaffe now took a break of three days before many of its units moved to northern France in order to attack Exeter again. Ninety aircraft took part in what would be the most devastating of the three attacks. Fires started in the city centre which developed into a conflagration, not helped when the Civil Defence Control room caught fire and was evacuated. Railway lines were cratered, gas mains fractured, electricity lines destroyed and seven key points damaged. No fewer than 400 shops, 150 offices, over 50 warehouses and 36 pubs and clubs were destroyed, whilst 1,500 houses were destroyed, 2,700 seriously damaged and another 16,000 damaged. In human terms, 164 civilians were killed and 563 injured, many of them seriously. Nick Beale recalls what happened to his father Brian who, as a 14-year-old Air Raid Precaution (ARP) runner, experienced that night:

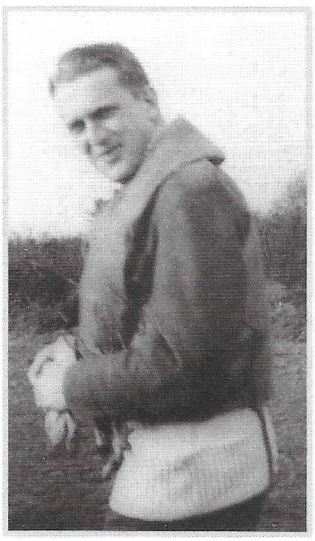
> 'On the night of the Exeter Blitz, he was woken by the intense light and crackling sound of magnesium parachute flares. He realised what they meant and reported for duty. All through the bombing, he carried messages between the Heavy Rescue Squad's depot by Polsloe Bridge and the ARP's HQ, a lean-to against the City Library in Castle Street. It was he who told the HQ personnel the Library itself was on fire – they hadn't realised. The two grown men on duty resorted to strong language, got out in haste and left him there, so he cycled back down Castle Street with flames from the burning buildings making an arch above his head in the narrow medieval street. The road surfaces were so hot that his bike tyres melted – and afterwards the ARP wouldn't pay for new ones.'

Again, the RAF managed to exact some retribution claiming four Ju 88s destroyed and a Do 17 destroyed and one damaged.

There would be one more attack during this core period of the Baedeker attacks when on the night of 4-5 May 1942, 107 aircraft attacked Cowes on the Isle of Wight. In the course of two waves, widespread damage was caused to property in the town itself – gas, electricity and water supplies were all affected and eight factories and the gasworks were all hit. Apparently damage could have been much worse if it was not for the Polish destroyer *Blyskawica* which was undergoing emergency repairs at the shipyard where she had been built. Her anti-aircraft guns were in constant action during the attack, so much so that extra ammunition had to be sent across from the mainland. She also laid a smokescreen, making it difficult for the German bombers to pinpoint targets in the town, but still 65 people lost their lives that night or died of their injuries afterwards. 604 Sqn claimed to have damaged one Do 217 and Flt Lt Edward Crew shot down the Do 217 of *Fw.* Erich Sonnemann of 9./KG 2 off the Isle of Wight.

For the next three months, operations would return to normal even if it was thought by some historians that the Baedeker Blitz continued until October 1942, albeit with

Plt Off Dave Boyd, 412 Sqn was also thought to have claimed a Do 217 on 16 May 1942.



Plt Off Dick Ellis, 412 Sqn, one of two pilots who probably shot down the Do 217 E-4 commanded by the Staffelkapitän of 3./KG 2, Hptm. Heinrich Schmid-Hederich on 16 May 1942.

a much lesser intensity. After a short break, the crew of *Oblt.* Rolf Häusner of 7./KG 2 recommenced operations in the early hours of 9 May 1942 attacking Norwich, noting that the Flak was heavy and in fact accounted for two experienced crews commanded by *Oblt.* Werner Böllert of 1./KG 2 and *Oblt.* Hermann Obermeier of 9./KG 2; the former collided with a balloon cable and crashed at Poringland in Norfolk while the latter simply failed to return. The following day, the Häusner crew then had their first brush with an RAF fighter.

At 1556 hrs, they lifted off from Schiphol to carry out a reconnaissance along the English east coast. An hour later, a Beaufighter of 236 Sqn crewed by Plt Off Laurence Lee and Flt Sgt Taylor lifted off from RAF Wattisham in Suffolk to carry out a reconnaissance of convoy routes off the Dutch Coast, but following radio failure elected to return to base. At 1712 hrs the RAF crew, flying at just 50 ft above the sea and to the east of Great Yarmouth, spotted the Do 217 two miles away flying at the same height.

> 'On returning to base flying at a height of 50 ft sighted at a distance of two miles a Do 217 flying at sea level. Own aircraft gave chase and attacked from starboard quarter to stern with a two second burst, but fire went high and to port. E/a also opened fire this falling short and to starboard and started taking evasive action causing our aircraft to be caught in slipstream and temporarily losing aim. Beaufighter eventually closed to 150 yds and fired two second burst from slightly below aircraft and registered hits on starboard wing root causing pieces to fly off and the e/a to fly very erratically. Aircraft unable to pursue owing to port engine cutting and immediately set course for base.'

The undamaged Do 217 landed back at Schiphol 17 minutes after the Beaufighter landed back at Wattisham. The Häusner crew had been lucky and would continue to be lucky for the next two months as the missions now began to intensify.

Hull, Poole, Great Yarmouth and Grimsby were attacked in the remainder of May as well as mining the Humber (twice) and Thames estuaries. Still losses occurred. II./KG 40 would lose just the one aircraft in May 1942 when *Ofw.* Martin Kalisch of 4./KG 40 was shot down off Happisburgh on the evening of 15 May by four Spitfires of 610 Sqn led by Sqn Ldr Gordon Haywood. Three of the crew were reported in the water, but by the time a launch arrived, one had disappeared and the lifeless bodies of *Ofw.* Kalisch and *Ogefr.* Rudolf Stein were recovered.

The remainder of the month would see seven losses on operations for KG 2 which included two *Staffelkapitäne.* The first was *Hptm.* Heinrich Schmid-Hederich of 3./KG 2 to Spitfires of 412 Sqn, possibly flown by Plt Off Dick Ellis and Plt Off Jim Stevenson on the evening of 16 May 1942. Dick Ellis reported the following:

> 'The Section had been patrolling at 2,500 ft for about 30 minutes when two bandits were reported to be approaching the convoy from four miles away to the east at 3,000 ft. My section had started to orbit to the east of the convoy and shortly afterwards I received orders to return to base but almost immediately I saw an aircraft come out of cloud just to the east and front of the convoy. The convoy reported this aircraft and I gave chase. The aircraft carried out a series of turns first towards the north-east then to the east and finally south-east at 2,000 ft. We had by this time gained on the aircraft which I now definitely recognised as a Do 217 and opened fire from 10-15 degrees astern with a 5-6 second burst at 2-300 yds range noticing strikes on the port wing. During this and subsequent attacks, the enemy took evasive action which consisted of a series of gentle turns. The e/a then began a shallow dive to sea level and I made two further attacks of 4-5 seconds each at 250 yds range from 10-15 degrees astern using up all of my ammunition. After these attacks I noticed black smoke coming from the port engine of the e/a. Yellow 2 then made two more attacks on the e/a which was now right on the deck. Shortly after jettisoning its bombs, I saw it make what appeared to be a normal forced landing on the sea 30-35 miles east and slightly south of Orfordness. The e/a floated level for about eight seconds and then it sank nose first. I saw no survivors.'

A second Do 217 was apparently claimed by Plt Off Dave Boyd of 412 Sqn as damaged and *Oblt.* Karl Borges of 3./KG 2 also failed to return from a similar mission to that of his *Staffelkapitän.*

The final *Staffelkapitän* loss that month was *Oblt.* Helmut Voigt of 4./KG 2 on the night of 29 May 1942 which occurred while he was attacking Grimsby; that night the RAF claimed four Do 217s destroyed by Fg Off Alan Picknett of 25 Sqn, Wg Cdr Max Aitken and Flt Lt Bill Winward of 68 Sqn and Sqn Ldr Glyn Ashfield of 157 Sqn, plus one probably destroyed by Plt Off John Wain of 151 Sqn. In addition to Voigt, 1./KG 2, 5./KG 2 and 7./KG 2 each lost a Do 217 over the North Sea.

The 25 May 1942 saw another air combat success for a Do 217 crew. An aircraft of II./KG 40 reported shooting down a Spitfire north-east of Leicester at 2130 hrs. This matches with the attack made by Plt Off Cyril Brown of 616 Sqn who claimed a Do 217 damaged near Leicester at 2117 hrs. However, the German claim was optimistic and the Spitfire pilot wrote afterwards:

> 'I approached e/a in such a manner as to put me in a position for a beam attack but when about 400 yds away, e/a opened fire, a bullet striking the hood, severely injuring me in the right eye and my attention was temporarily diverted from my attack. As however I was still in position and only about 200 yds from e/a and still had quite a good bead on him I delivered a 3-4 second burst with my machine guns. As I was feeling decidedly ill, I made no more attacks but landed with difficulty at North Luffenham.'

The Do 217 got away unscathed but Cyril lost his eye which earned him the nickname 'Cyclops' Brown for the rest of his RAF career. Another crew from 5./KG 40 claimed a Spitfire south-east of Hastings at 0445 hrs on 30 May 1942, but this cannot be matched with any RAF loss and is thought to have actually been a Hurricane of 1 Sqn flown by Flt Lt Les Scott of 1 Sqn who reported shooting at an unidentified aircraft between Dover and Dungeness at around this time.

It should be noted that at this time intruder Hurricanes of both 1 and 3 Sqns were proving to be a nuisance to Do 217 crews taking off and landing. *Lt.* Rudolf Abrahamczik of I./KG 2, who would later be awarded the *Ritterkreuz*, found this out landing back at Gilze-Rijen from mining the Thames Estuary in the early hours of 31 May 1942. He and his crew were alarmed to be surrounded by bullets as they touched down:

Above: Lt. Rudolf Abrahamczik of I./KG 2, and with his crew in August 1942.

'30 May 1942 was the night of the first big raid by the RAF on Cologne. We had taken off from Gilze-Rijen that night to drop mines in the Thames Estuary. At Gilze there was a *Gruppe* of nightfighters; the RAF nightfighters were observing our nightfighter bases. On the return, we were ordered to land at Rheine but because my radio was not working, I did not get the warning and tried to land at Gilze. Suddenly the *Bordfunker* and *Bordmechaniker* who were sitting together during the landing cried out: "Nightfighter behind!" We were attacked at short range, about 20-30 m. The nightfighter hit our fuselage, cockpit and both engines. The right engine was burning, the left propeller feathered, the instruments had quit working and we were too low to bail out, just 150-180 metres. I really needed a lot of luck to bring the aircraft down. We stopped skidding not too far from the fire station so they could start their work immediately…'

The cause of this was Flt Sgt Colin Smith of 3 Sqn who wrote:

'In a few minutes the usual landing and aerodrome lights were exposed and enemy aircraft seen attempting to land. I went into a diving attack and gave a one second burst, missing the aircraft. I then went into a dead astern attack giving a further burst of about two seconds. I saw strikes on the fuselage but was forced to bank steeply to avoid collision. I lost sight of the enemy aircraft and no flames were seen from the ground. Time attack delivered 0125 hrs.'

A Hurricane Mk II of 3 Sqn, RAF Manston, August 1942.

Sqn Ldr James MacLachlan of 1 Sqn who, with Flt Lt Karel Kuttelwascher, claimed three Do 217s over France on the night of 3 June 1942.

Fw. Franz Koch of 7./KG 2 who, along with his crew, was killed by 1 Sqn when his Do 217 E-4, W.Nr. 5331, U5+NR, was shot down at Coutances, 3-4 June 1942. As can be seen by the Spanish Cross, he was a veteran of the Legion Condor.

June 1942 saw the Häusner crew attacking Canterbury (twice, reprisals for Bomber Command attacking Cologne), Ipswich, Poole, Southampton, Weston-Super-Mare and mining the Solent (three times). All were attacked without incident apart from the raid on Poole on the night of 3-4 June. On their return to Ste André in France, the German bombers were followed by two Hurricane intruders of 1 Sqn flown by Sqn Ldr James MacLachlan and Flt Lt Karel Kuttelwascher who between them claimed to have destroyed three Do 217s and damaged another three at Ste André. The Häusner crew were forced to divert to Evreux but two Dorniers from KG 2 were shot down (one of which was flown by *Fw.* Franz Koch of 7./KG 2, crashing at Coutances with the deaths of the whole crew) and three more from KG 2 suffering slight damage. Four aircraft from II./KG 40 were damaged.

Another crew that had joined I./KG 2 at the start of May 1942 was commanded by *Oblt.* Karl 'Mano' von Manowarda. He had initially joined 5./KG 2 in September 1940 and the following year he carried out instructor duties and conversion training to the Do 217. He had flown an attack on Norwich on 9 May 1942 then an attack on Southampton on 21 June and a convoy attack on 22 June 1942.

At just before midnight on 24 June 1942, Mano and his crew lifted off from Gilze-Rijen, one of 80 aircraft from KG 2, I./KG 40, II./KG 77 and KGr. 106 headed for Birmingham. Mano's bomb load was a single 1,200-kg bomb plus two SC 500s. To counter this attack, the RAF launched 54 nightfighters of which only those from 25, 68 and 151 Sqns were successful in intercepting the German bombers claiming five destroyed, one probable and one damaged. The most successful pilot that night was former Battle of Britain veteran Wg Cdr Irving 'Black' Smith, Commanding Officer of 151 Sqn who remembered the night very well:

'The events are fairly clear to me for two reasons. First, I flew W4095, one of the first nightfighter Mosquitos built. Second, I destroyed the first aircraft with a Mosquito in the war.

'The GCI was Coltishall and I think the controller was Flt Lt Brown – one of the very few who could think three-dimensionally. He brought me in exactly as I asked him to do in every case. I do not remember the order of targets but the first was a Heinkel [sic]. I always at night approached at the highest possible speed 1-2,000 ft below what I thought his height to be as we had no height-finding radar and pulled up steeply into him at the closest possible range. In the first case I was at approximately the same height and the target spotted me at about 400 yds, dropping his bombs and went into a very steep diving turn to the left. Because of my high speed, I had a job to follow and shoot before I lost him in a patch of cloud near the sea. The second was copybook. A long burst and the aircraft went straight down and exploded on hitting the sea. The third spotted me, dropped his bombs and bunted. I bunted inside him. I only had two guns working at this time. I could see the strikes on the underside of the wings and he went straight down into the sea, exploded and burned.

'I was covered in lubricating oil from the last target and could no longer see out so I returned to base.'

Despite the belief there were He 111s flying that night, the reality was that the only aircraft lost were a Do 217 flown by the *Kommandeur* of II./KG 40, *Hptm.* Waldemar Höner *zu* Drewer, a Ju 88 from 4./KG 77 and two Ju 88s from KGr. 106. A further Ju 88 from KGr. 106 crash-landed at Schiphol having been damaged by a nightfighter, whilst another Dornier 217 landed at Gilze-Rijen with dead and wounded crew – this aircraft was Mano's:

'Over The Wash, we were attacked by a nightfighter. I turned left, dropped the bombs by using the emergency release (reaching it along with Heinrich Kaiser) and dived. Ernst Fröhlich shouted "He's following us!" I answered "Shoot him down!" and heard Ernst's MG 131 rumble. Very low, I flew near Norwich and Ipswich (I almost hit a balloon cable south of Ipswich), and out over the North Sea. I called my crew one after the other, but only the *Bordmechaniker* did not answer. "Heinrich, go and see what has happened to Ernst Geselle." An anxious silence followed. Heinrich plugged in his intercom. "Ernst is dead." I looked towards the British Isles and I thought grimly "You will never see me again – shit England!", but the next evening I was over England again, target Norwich. Filled with bitterness, I hit the centre of this blackened town.

"We buried Ernst in foreign soil on his birthday. Before the flight he had leaned against me and said he had a premonition of what was going to happen to him over England. We had lain on the ground, he on my right using a 500-kg bomb as a pillow. His premonition had been fulfilled."

Although reading the combat report of 'Black' Smith makes him a possibility, it is more likely that the Mosquito that attacked Mano was flown by another former Battle of Britain pilot, Sqn Ldr Don Darling. Together with his navigator/radar operator Fg Off Bill Wright, they filed the following combat report:

'... A blip was obtained at maximum range below and to starboard at 0118 hrs. Visual followed at 2,000 ft,

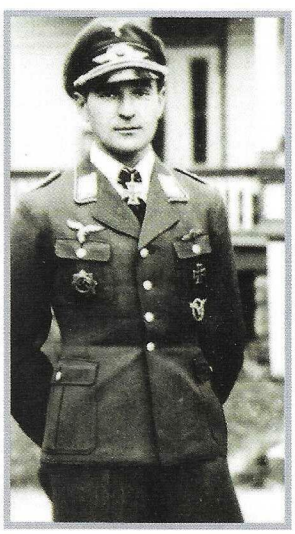
Oblt. von Manowarda with Fw. Ernst Geselle just before the latter was killed in action on 23 June 1942.

The reason for Fw. Geselle's death – the recently operational de Havilland Mosquito nightfighter. This example, W4052, is the prototype nightfighter fitted with A.I. Mk.IV radar and is painted all-over RDM 2A Special Night Finish, known as 'Lamp Black'.

height 5,000 ft of a Do 217. Range was closed to 200 yds and e/a dived towards cloud. A short burst was fired at it just before it entered cloud until it came out when another burst was fired as it emerged. Return fire from dorsal turret was experienced but this ceased when strikes were seen on e/a's fuselage and it dived to port and disappeared in cloud at 1,500 ft and was lost…'

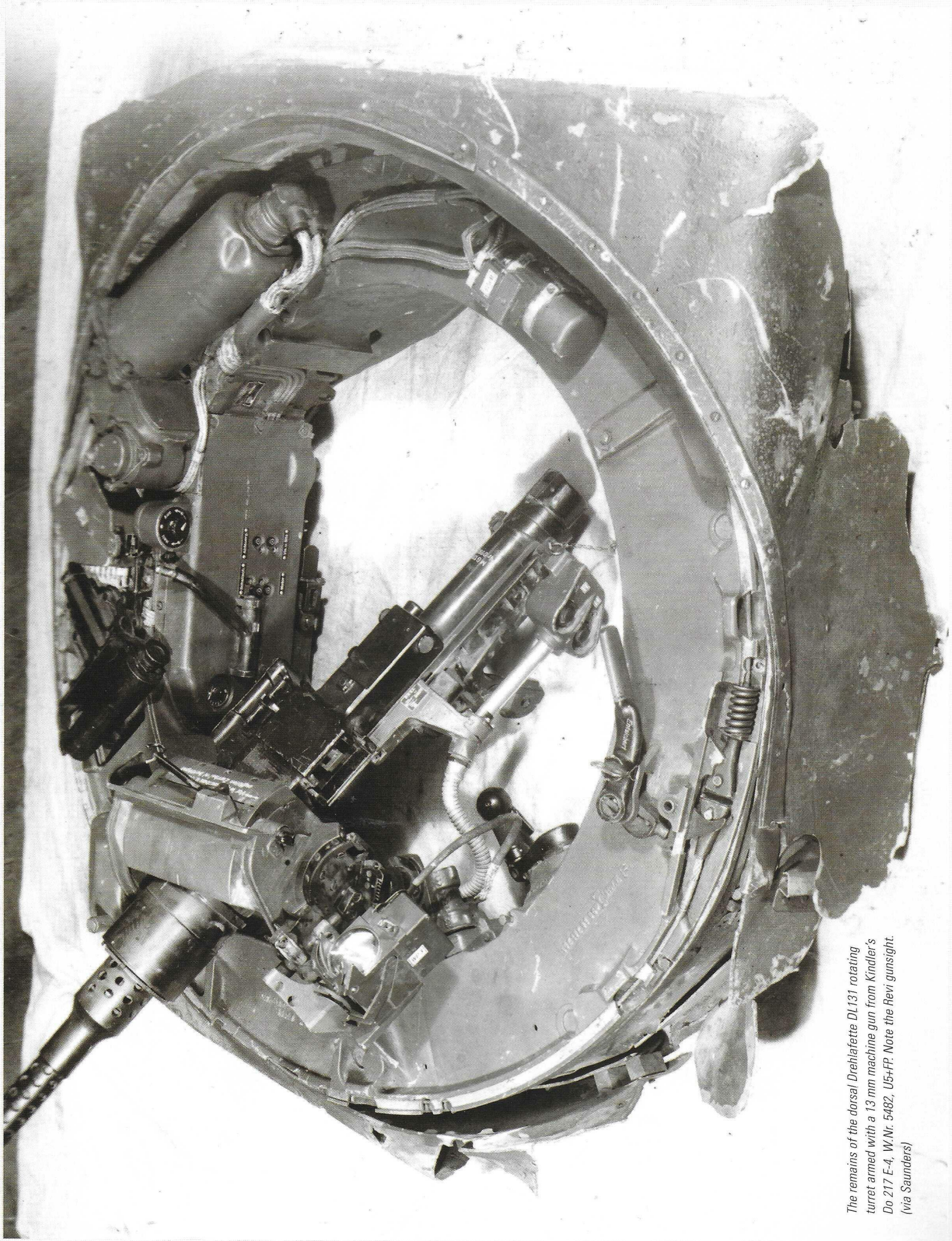
Another claim for an RAF aircraft was made by a Do 217 crew on the night of 6-7 June 1942 when *Fw.* Stephan Kling of 5./KG 40 claimed an unidentified aircraft off Ramsgate at 0109 hrs. Again, the identity of this aircraft cannot be confirmed.

July 1942 would be another bad month for KG 2 losing 11 aircraft on operations over Britain resulting in the deaths of 39 men with another five captured. Amongst the casualties were *Hptm.* Walter Frank, the *Staffelkapitän* of 1./KG 2, on the night of 21 July, probably shot down by Plt Off George Fisher of 151 Sqn 50 miles east of the Humber Estuary. Fisher's Mosquito was damaged by return fire from his victim. Also *Hptm.* Karl-Heinz Marten, *Staffelkapitän* of 7./KG 2, on the night of 23 July 1942; 68 Sqn claimed four Do 217s destroyed with 409 Sqn claiming one more probably destroyed and one damaged. A second Do 217 of 5./KG 40 flown by *Oblt.* Heinrich Viess was the only other loss and was shared between Flt Lt Edward McMillan of 409 Sqn and Flt Lt Harvey Sweetman of 486 Sqn, the latter flying a Typhoon; the German crew stated that it was a single-engined aircraft that shot them down. *Hptm.* Alfred Kindler, the *Staffelkapitän* of 6./KG 2, and his crew were captured; all were highly experienced and all of them were recipients or future recipients of the *Deutsches Kreuz in Gold*, with Kindler later awarded the *Ritterkreuz* in September 1942 *in absentia*. They had been hit by Flak inbound to attack Birmingham on the night of 30 July 1942 but even though they continued to their target, on the way back they knew they could not make it home and so bailed out, their Do 217 crashing near Newmarket. In addition to these four, another four holders of the *Deutsches Kreuz in Gold* were killed in July, proof that experienced aircrew were



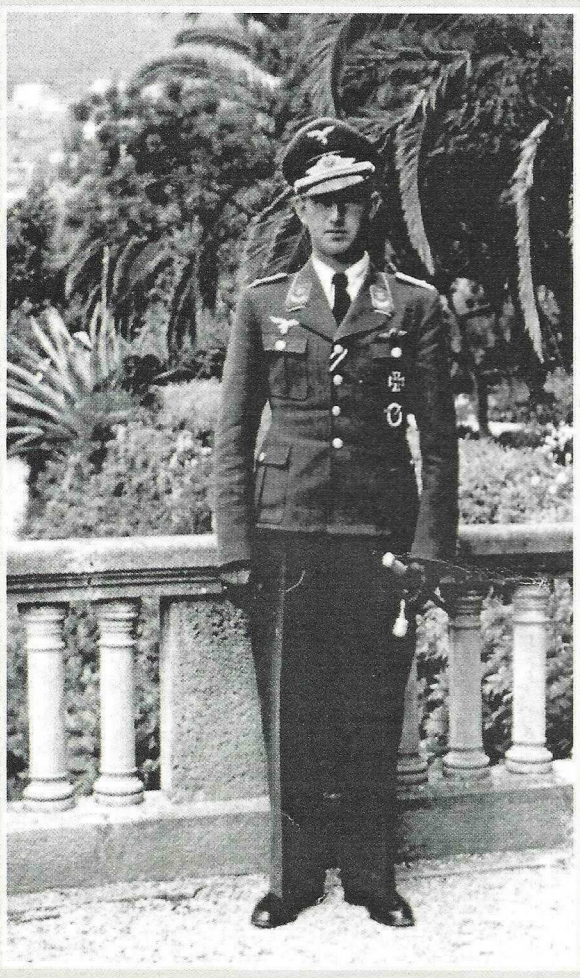
Hptm. Alfred Kindler, Staffelkapitän of 6./KG 2, who was shot down on 31 July 1942, seen here as a POW in Canada after the award of the Ritterkreuz.

Cognac Spring 1942 – Hptm. Mitscher (Stab./KG 2), Lt. Hans Peters (4./KG 2, killed 28 July 1944), Lt. Anton Herrmann (6./KG 2) and Oblt. Friedrich Dörflinger (6./KG 2, killed 30 July 1942).



The remains of the dorsal Drehlafette DL131 rotating turret armed with a 13 mm machine gun from Kindler's Do 217 E-4, W.Nr. 5482, U5+FP. Note the Revi gunsight. (via Saunders)

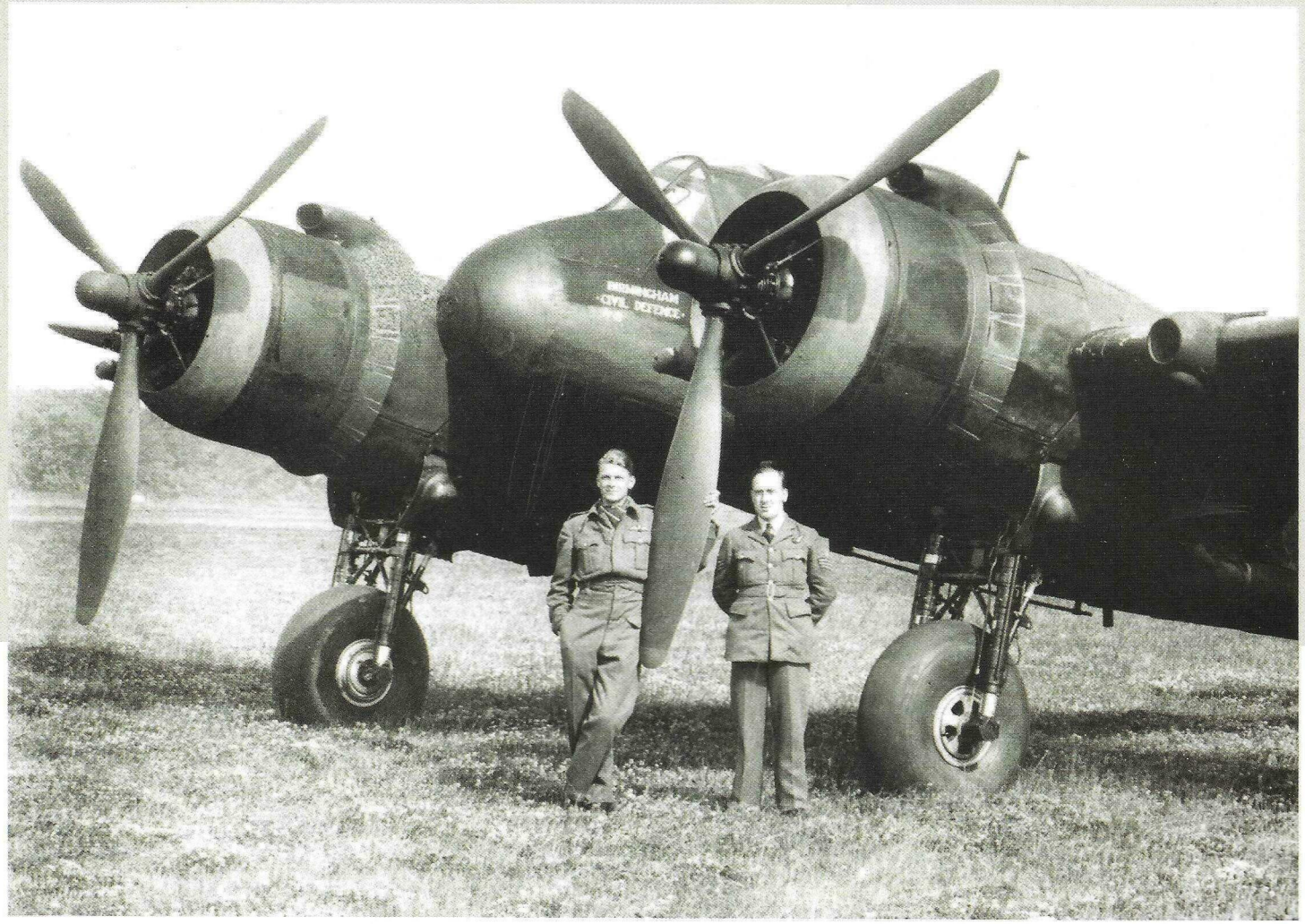
View of the open gun mount. (via Saunders)



Oblt. Friedrich Dörflinger of 6./KG 2, killed in action on 30 July 1942.

Oblt. Josef Steudel and Oblt. Otto Waldmann of 8./KG 2. Waldmann was killed in action on 18 July 1942 when shot down by Flt Lt Phil Archer of 416 Sqn.

Below: The Beaufighter crew responsible for Friedrich Dörflinger's demise – Fg Off Eric Raybould and Flt Sgt Edward Mullaley of 68 Sqn. The two victory markings denote two aircraft from KG 2 shot down by this aircraft in the space of just over a week. This Beaufighter Mk IF, P-WM, X7842, named 'Birmingham Civil Defence' was part of 'B' Flight at RAF Coltishall and seems to have been used by various crews on the same day for photographic opportunities. See identical view with a different crew on page 40.



The remains of Friedrich Dörflinger's Do 217 E-4, W.Nr. 1213, U5+DP, at Salthouse Marshes, Norfolk.

being lost. These were *Lt.* Johannes Bredtmeyer of 4./KG 2 on 7 July 1942 (in one of two aircraft shot down by 219 Sqn); *Oblt.* Otto Waldmann of 8./KG 2 on 18 July 1942 (shot down by Flt Lt Phil Archer of 416 Sqn); *Ofw.* Heinrich Wolpers of 1./KG 2 on 22 July 1942 (lost with *Hptm.* Walter Frank); and *Oblt.* Friedrich-Wilhelm Dörflinger of 6./KG 2 on 30 July 1942 (shot down by Fg Off Eric Raybould of 68 Sqn). July saw a slight improvement with just three aircraft lost on operations resulting in seven crew killed and four captured.

Oblt. Wilhelm Schmitter of *Stab* II./KG 40 carried out his third and final attack on Leamington Spa in July 1942 and resulted in him being awarded the *Ritterkreuz* in September of that year. His first attack against target L7462, described as Automotive Products Ltd, was on the evening of 25 May 1942, but for an unknown reason he turned back, dropping his bombs on Lychett Minster near Poole in Dorset. The next attack was more successful – at 1306 hrs on 13 June 1942, he dropped his bomb load across the factory buildings causing structural damage to the Borg and Beck shops, severe damage to the Aircraft Experimental shops and minor damage and a fire in the Aircraft components area. Fifty-nine-year-old Walter Williams was badly injured in the attack and died the next day. However, Schmitter's final attack at 0621 hrs on 16 July 1942 was far more devastating, as the post-raid report states:

> 'Most damage occurred in the Brake Assembly Shop and Remote Control Department. This affected hydraulic equipment of tanks, aircraft, War Department trucks, armoured fighting vehicles and Motor Torpedo Boats. Damage was also done to machine tools and plant involving eight special purpose flaring and wire winding machines, five of which were repairable. Stores affected: testing and measuring equipment including material and

finished parts; tanks and finished parts; aircraft; rubber hose; copper tube; approved material for aircraft.

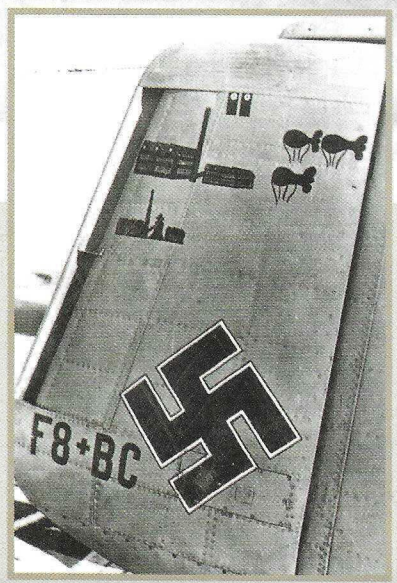
'Assembly Shop: The roof sustained damage to the extent of 10,000 sq.ft.

'Main heavy aircraft shop: 75% of production will be maintained during daylight. It is not possible to estimate effect on night shift production owing to damage caused to main structure which will prevent adequate blackout.'

Sadly, four civilians were killed in the attack. Schmitter apparently received minor wounds from shell splinters in this attack but his award of the *Ritterkreuz*, to go with the *Ehrenpokal* awarded on 5 January 1942 and the *Deutsches Kreuz in Gold* awarded on 18 May 1942, came on 19 September 1942. Of his crew, it is not known whether *Uffz.* Wagner (observer) received any accolades but *Fw.* Heinz Graeber (radio operator) would also receive the

Oblt. Wilhelm Schmitter (left) with his crew. (via Green)

Below and bottom right: Oblt. Wilhelm Schmitter taxying in in his pale grey Do 217, which is thought to be RLM 76. (via Green)



Left: The port tail fin of Oblt. Wilhelm Schmitter's F8+BC showing silhouettes denoting the two attacks on Leamington Spa.

Oblt. Wilhelm Schmitter walks away from his Dornier after taxying in (seen opposite page). The finish of the airframe suggests it was recently repainted.

Ehrenpokal, *Deutsches Kreuz in Gold* and *Ritterkreuz*, while *Fw.* Johannes Krohn (flight engineer) received nothing and was killed with *Stab* II./KG 100 on 16 February 1944.

Such losses experienced in July 1942 were as a result of the Do 217 being the main aircraft now prosecuting the Luftwaffe's mining, anti-shipping and bombing tasks against Britain. It was now coming up against improved British defences assisted by ground and air radar. However, it was not a perfect aircraft, as *Oblt.* Josef Steudel of 8./KG 2 wrote in an echo of what was described in the British intelligence quoted earlier:

> 'One thing that put us at a major disadvantage were the exhaust flames from our aircraft. We were like flying torches visible from a distance. Eventually our aircraft were fitted with flame dampers which lost us five kilometres in speed but that was the lesser evil. In any case the nightfighters were always faster. This problem with the exhaust flames was another indication that the Do 217 had not been designed for night missions. The nightly bombing missions were neither intended nor planned when the air war against England began. After the Battle of Britain, the entire air war strategy had to be reviewed and rethought.'

Then there were the engines, Josef Steudel continues:

> 'Among the many technical shortcomings the engines were the most critical. The Do 217 E was fitted with BMW 801 engines – air-cooled, double star motors. I myself favoured this engine because its low humming tone was gentle on the ears! I valued the air cooling because such engines were less vulnerable when being shot at than one cooled by liquid. However it was very susceptible to failure – many missions were cut short because of engine trouble and many crews were injured in emergency landings or killed in crashes.'

However, it was the technical advantages made by the RAF since the Battle of Britain that were causing the Do 217's crews the most angst, especially radar. Josef Steudel said of radar:

> 'Among our experiments was the introduction of *Düppel*. These were black coloured aluminium strips which had the purpose of jamming radar. For a while *Düppel* served its purpose until the Tommies managed again to get a step ahead and neutralised it. I always felt sorry for the flight engineer – he had to lie on his stomach on the floor with a long carton of *Düppel* beside him. He had to open the door and push the *Düppel* out – a difficult task. At the end of the flight he would look like a chimney sweep. The whole thing was an emergency improvisation.'

There would be a claim for a Beaufighter by a crew from 4./KG 40 south-west of Taunton at 0314 hrs on 2 July 1942 during an attack on Bristol. Although 125, 307 and 604 Sqns were active that night, no aircraft reported being damaged let alone shot down. Another claim by 4./KG 40 came at 1841 hrs on 22 July off the Yorkshire coast. Sgt John Staples and Sgt Reg Catlin of 25 Sqn were on a night-flying test when told to intercept a Do 217, which damaged their Beaufighter; this crew landed on one engine at RAF Hibaldstow at 1910 hrs.

August 1942 proved to be a crucial month for the Do 217 crews, 19 August coming as an unpleasant surprise for those unlucky to be flying that day.

Oblt. Rudolf *Graf* Thun Hohenstein had taken command of 7./KG 2 following the death of *Hptm.* Karl-Heinz Marten on 24 July 1942. The first three days of August saw Hohenstein and his crew attack a convoy, carry out an attack on Norwich and a daylight attack against an airfield near Doncaster. It was on this latter mission that they were intercepted by a Spitfire while another Spitfire flown by Plt Off Lindsay Black of 485 Sqn accounted for another Do 217 of 7./KG 2 near Kettering flown by *Uffz.* Erich Beyerer. After having machine-gunned vehicles at Brampton and then dropped four bombs at Wellingborough, Beyerer's aircraft was intercepted by two Spitfires from 485 Sqn:

Plt Off Lindsay Black of 485 Sqn who shot down the Do 217 of 7./KG 2 flown by Uffz. Erich Beyerer on 3 August 1942. Black, who would be awarded the DFC, was killed in an accident on 5 March 1945 while with the Day Fighter Leaders' School.

Oblt. Rudolf Graf Thun Hohenstein, Staffelkapitän of 7./KG 2, photographed while a POW, 8 August 1942.

The pilot who shot down Rudolf Graf Thun Hohenstein – Plt Off Peter Cleaver of 68 Sqn.

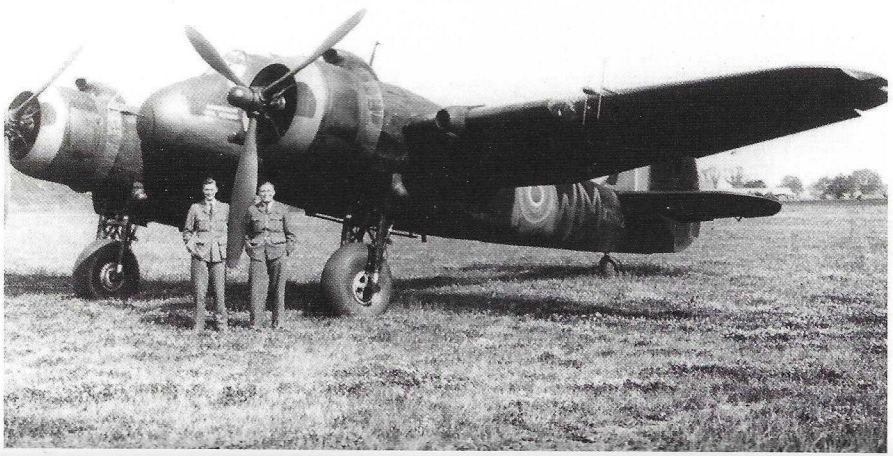
Peter Cleaver and Flt Sgt Wallace Nairn in front of a Beaufighter.

'At 1812 hrs about half a minute after having seen bomb bursts on Wellingborough, Blue Section saw a Do 217 at about 450 ft. Fg Off Black got into position below and to starboard and as bandit climbed into the cloud gave a long burst with cannon and machine gun at about 450 yds closing to 400 yds. Bandit disappeared into cloud. Fg Off Black told to orbit climbed into cloud and soon saw bandit. He got into position above and behind and gave two short bursts first 100 yds, second 75 yds. Ineffective return fire from dorsal and under gun was experienced causing no damage. Fg Off Black turned away and saw bandit start to dive. Between his two short bursts of MG he saw bandit jettisoning an object afterwards identified as a dinghy. Fg Off Black also saw vapour appearing from the wing tips of bandit after his first attack. Following bandit down he saw it burning on the ground.'

The Do 217 hit the ground at Cranford, Northamptonshire and burst into flames; there were no survivors from Beyerer's crew.

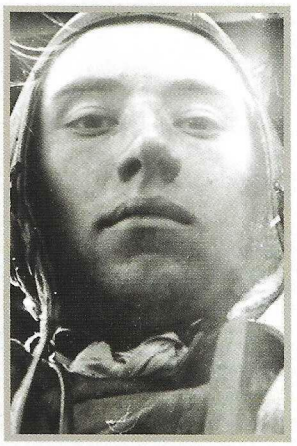
The next mission for 7.*Staffel's Staffelkapitän* was an attack on Nottingham taking off from Deelen at 2300 hrs on 7 August 1942. Seven crews of KG 2 received the order to attack an armaments factory in Nottingham. Rudolf *Graf* Thun Hohenstein's bomber was loaded with four ABB 500-kg incendiary bomb containers and from Arnhem-Deelen they flew at low altitude over the North Sea via Texel to the Lincolnshire coast just north of The Wash, where they climbed to 2,000 m. It was then that they came under attack. Plt Off Peter Cleaver and Flt Sgt Wallace Nairn of 68 Sqn had taken off from Coltishall in Norfolk on a dusk patrol. At 2315 hrs they were ordered to return to base but were then given a series of vectors ending in being put onto an enemy aircraft at 10,000 ft:

'Throughout chase e/a was jinking violently 30-40 degrees port and starboard and 1,000 ft up and down. Contact was maintained for nine minutes and pilot obtained a visual at 1,200 ft range on exhausts of e/a two from each engine above the mainplane. E/a then gradually started to lose height and levelled out. Pilot closing to 600 ft identified e/a as Do 217 and opened fire from astern with four second burst. Strike seen all over e/a and flames appeared between port engine and fuselage. Slight return fire was experienced as pilot attacked. E/a dived into cloud still burning from 8,000 ft. Beau followed and saw a big explosion on the ground and three or four fires spread over half a mile or more. Fire on ground in vicinity of Coningsby beacon.'



In the Dornier bullets went diagonally through the cockpit but fortunately no one was injured. The left engine burst into flames immediately and the rudders were no longer functioning. *Uffz.* Horst Arnscheidt, the

Despite being of poor quality, this photograph reveals that little remained of Graf Thun Hohenstein's Do 217 E-4, W.Nr. 5455, U5+DR.



Uffz. Horst Arnscheidt, observer on W.Nr. 5455.

observer, pulled the emergency release for the bombs and immediately after the crew began to bail out at high speed. *Fw.* Helmut Kunze, the engineer, was not able to open the emergency escape hatch in the floor and so Horst used his torch so that Kunze could read the hatch operating instructions. When Kunze finally opened the hatch, he immediately fell through the hole together with the door! *Uffz.* Paulo Bremer, the radio operator, had thrown off the canopy roof in the meantime but he preferred to jump through the opening in the bottom of the cockpit, following Kunze. Horst released *Graf* Thun Hohenstein's seat belts and then bailed out; the pilot then followed.

The following day, it was confirmed that prisoners had been taken at Revesby Abbey to the east of Coningsby. Amazingly, all of the Do 217's crew-members survived.

Compared to the previous month, for the next ten days operations appear to have been quiet. *Oblt.* Mano von Manowarda, now flying with 3./KG 2, records only a search on 10 August 1942 for *Fw.* Georg Zaglmeier and his crew from 2./KG 2 who had been lost the night before while attacking Birmingham. Zaglmeier, *Ofw.* Helmut Metz of *Stab* II./KG 40 (target Luton) and *Fw.* Philipp Kraushaar of 4./KG 40 (target Colchester) had fallen to nightfighters with Sqn Ldr Harold Pleasance of 25 Sqn, Sqn Ldr Bob Braham of 29 Sqn and Sqn Ldr Bill Beaumont of 219 Sqn each claiming a Do 217 that night. Kraushaar would be awarded the *Deutsches Kreuz in Gold* posthumously.

However, all would change on 19 August and *Oblt.* Josef Steudel of 8./KG 2 wrote:

> 'On 19 August 1942, the British and Canadians attempted a bridgehead at Dieppe. The undertaking, called 'Operation Jubilee', apparently surprised the German high command. KG 2 was sent against the invading troops and suffered severe losses from British fighters. The weakened state in which KG 2 then found itself was evident because very few aircraft were combat ready after Dieppe.'

Seen in Canada as POWs are Uffz. Paulo Bremer (back row, 2nd left) and Uffz. Horst Arnscheidt (back row 3rd right).

Even though Josef Steudel did not take part, KG 2 was first informed of the attack at 0722 hrs in the morning and it ended at 1900 hrs when three Do 217s from III./KG 2 attacked retreating shipping off Portsmouth. For the crew of *Uffz.* Anton Ries of 5./KG 2 (who would be shot down by Flak on 3 January 1943 and he and all of his crew taken prisoner), it was a sharp introduction to operational flying. Having completed their training on the Do 17 at the *Grosse Kampffliegerschule* Greifswald, they were posted to IV./KG 2 on 10 July 1942 for conversion to the Do 217 only to move to 5./KG 2 at Eindhoven five days later; in 1943 their Allied captors recorded how,

> 'On 19 August 1942 they made their first war flight. They were not then considered to be fully trained and were only employed because of the importance of the operation. In the morning nine aircraft from II./KG 2

took off from Eindhoven to attack shipping off Dieppe. Five of them were lost. In the afternoon a further sortie was made also by nine aircraft, this time including the present POWs. At about 1500 hrs BST this crew located the ships some distance off the French coast; intense Flak was encountered and almost simultaneously their aircraft was attacked by five Spitfires. The bombs were dropped with unobserved results and the pilot managed to get away by taking violent evasive action. During the encounter, hits were sustained in the undercarriage mechanism, ailerons and fuel tank and an emergency landing was made at Evreux. The radio operator [*Uffz.* Arno Salz] claimed one Spitfire shot down.'

Their Do 217 E-4 W.Nr. 5319 suffered quite severe damage.

KG 2 lost 14 aircraft throughout the day with another 13 suffering varying degrees of damage. In human terms, 38 aircrew were killed, five captured and 18 wounded. II./KG 40 fared better, losing three aircraft with another four damaged, with 11 aircrew killed, one captured and two wounded. The most senior casualty in KG 2 was the *Staffelkapitän* of 6./KG 2, *Oblt.* Karl-Ludwig Krüger, while on II./KG 40 the most senior casualty was *Oblt.* Adolf Wolff of 5./KG 40. The RAF claimed to have destroyed 42 Do 217s, probably destroyed another six and damaged another 48. With so much over-claiming, it is hard to say 'who got whom', apart from the loss of the aircraft flown by *Oblt.* Wolff of 5./KG 40. Rushed to get airborne from Soesterberg to search for shipping off the east coast that might be headed for Dieppe, Wolff's crew were returning to base when at 1024 hrs they spotted two twin-engined fighters which immediately attacked. Fg Off John Bryan and Sgt Desmond Roberts of 137 Sqn flying Westland Whirlwinds recorded the combat:

'Section dived and identified e/a as a Do 217 which turned across to starboard firing from top turret and climbing. Red 2 gave a four second burst from 200 yds observing no results. Red 1 made a steep turn to starboard coming in to dead astern slightly below, Do 217 jinking and firing continuously from bottom turret. Red 1 gave a three second burst from 250 closing to 200 yds observing strikes on underside of rear half of the fuselage and port engine and pieces falling off e/a. He gave a further two bursts finishing his ammunition from dead astern seeing strikes underneath fuselage near cockpit and pieces falling off. Red 1 then broke away and Red 2 came in line astern and diving slightly gave three bursts from 300 closing to 200 yds observing strikes underneath and on top, smoke and pieces falling off. Four crew now bailed out from 1,500 ft, parachutes were seen to open. The first to bail out had a large hole in the parachute. Red 2 broke away to starboard and came in again from port, e/a now in flames pulled up sharply, stalled and dived straight into the sea.'

The pilot, unwounded, was the only survivor and was captured.

Do 217s did file claims for aircraft shot down off Dieppe and in each case they were Spitfires: known claims were two by II./KG 2, while five were recorded by 5./KG 40 at 1402, 1628, 1635, 1638 and 1943 hrs. By means of example Sqn Ldr Wilfred Duncan-Smith of 64 Sqn was shot down by return fire while in the process of shooting down a Do 217, 20 miles north-west of Dieppe at 1540 hrs, bailing out to be rescued by the RN, while Plt Off Wilf Smithyman flying a Typhoon of 266 Sqn was last seen chasing three Do 217s between 1400-1505 hrs; his body was later washed ashore in France.

It would have been reasonable to think that operations for the remainder of the month would be light. This was the case for II./KG 40 but not KG 2. One crew-member from 6./KG 2 who was captured three days later told his captors:

'The strength of both II. and III./KG 2 has become quite seriously depleted. Prior to Dieppe, 6./KG 2 which was the strongest in II./KG 2, had not more than seven or nine aircraft and crews. Three of these failed to return from operations at Dieppe and a fourth crashed near Amiens and exploded just after the crew, one of whom was seriously wounded, got clear. III./KG 2 was in a worse condition. At the time of Dieppe, one *Staffel* was down to three crews, two of whom were on leave and, according to a prisoner, the total strength of the *Gruppe* was scarcely more than the equivalent of one full *Staffel*.'

The next loss was that of experienced crew. In mid-September 1941 *Oblt.* Hans Walter Wolff had been awarded the *Frontflugspange in Gold* for achieving 110 operational flights, the *Ehrenpokal* in June 1941 and he would be awarded the *Deutsches Kreuz in Gold* in December 1942. Due to the experience of all of his crew, in December 1941 they had been posted to 10./KG 2 at Achmer-Bramsche as instructors, returning to 6./KG 2 in July 1942. Wolff would then take temporary command of 6./KG 2 following the death of *Oblt.* Karl-Ludwig Krüger on 19 August 1942. An attack on a small factory north-east of Cambridge (the Unicam Works) on the night of 22 August would be his 154th, and as it would transpire, last mission of the war.

At about 2000 hrs, four crews from II./KG 2 were to take part in the attack. Hans Wolff hurriedly briefed the crews as he had been by the *Gruppenkommandeur Hptm.* Walter Bradel only shortly before. Each observer was issued with large-scale maps and told to be sure of the target which was said to be the Chesterton Fen Road railway viaduct over the River Cam. Carrying four 500-kg bombs, Hans Wolff made landfall at Orfordness at 10,000 ft and, with good visibility, began to descend towards Cambridge. Just as the aircraft had reached 5,000 ft, they were caught unawares by a Mosquito of 157 Sqn flown by Wg Cdr Richard Slade with his radar operator Plt Off Philip Truscott, who had got airborne on patrol at 2053 hrs and, when 25 miles east of Southwold, had been vectored on Wolff's Do 217 which was approaching the coast about 12 miles away. They then stalked the German bomber and when they were sure it was hostile, at 2240 hrs,

'I fired from 500 ft with cannon only for two to three seconds holding him in my sights the whole time. Strikes were seen on the port side of the fuselage and centre section and as he fell away after I ceased fire, an enormous shower of sparks shot out, apparently from his port side. He dived away to starboard so fast it was impossible to get a deflection shot in. His silhouette was lost against the dark ground but some very dim lights appeared on his wing tips suggesting formation lights having been knocked on. There was also a faint glow from the fuselage or an engine which I would not have claimed as a fire. Further isolated sparks flew out at some distance as e/a went down.'

The attack came as a complete surprise to the German crew. Wolff managed to dive steeply, but with an engine

Oblt. Hans Wolff of 6./KG 2, shot down with his crew on 22 August 1942.

burning. He tried to regain control but knew it was pointless so he jettisoned the bombs and, when at 2,000 ft, ordered his crew to bail out, to such an extent that he had to kick out one crewman who was scared to jump. On landing, all four met up and decided to hand themselves in to the nearest police station where they were courteously received and offered a biscuit and a cup of tea.

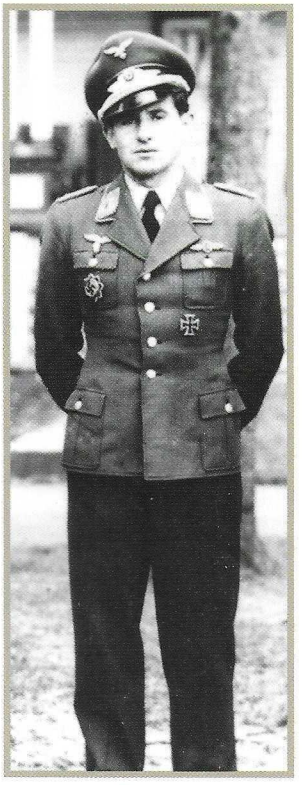
KG 2 would lose another two aircraft the following night, target Derby. The aircraft, flown by *Ofw.* Richard Helmecke of 1./KG 2, who would be awarded the *Deutsches Kreuz in Gold* in November 1942, was believed to have been shot down by Wg Cdr Harold 'Flash' Pleasance of 25 Sqn into the North Sea 20 miles east of Mablethorpe. Meanwhile, the *Staffelkapitän* of 2./KG 2, *Hptm.* Rudolf Hellmann, was shot down by Sqn Ldr Bill Alington of 25 Sqn. Hellmann and his crew were killed when their aircraft exploded in mid-air over East Walton in Norfolk. Then 1. and 9./ KG 2 would each lose aircraft on operations against Leeds on the night of 28 August 1942. The reasons for their loss are not known and all eight crew are still reported as missing.

A similar pattern of attacks and losses followed in September 1942 with KG 2 losing six aircraft and crews and II./KG 40 one, the most notable loss being the *Staffelkapitän* of 1./KG 2, *Oblt.* Alfred Cornelius, on the night of 23 September, target York. He was probably shot down off Flamborough Head by Plt Off Ray Peake of 25 Sqn. Of note, one of the losses, flown by *Fw.* Alfred Witting on the night of 8 September 1942 – which crashed at Orwell in Cambridgeshire having been shot down by Fg Off Alexander McRitchie of 151 Sqn – was recorded by both 3./KG 2 and 6./KG 40. Witting was flying an aircraft with the markings of 6./KG 40 so there was either a shortage of aircraft in KG 2 or he was flying with KG 2 for combat experience. KG 2 had suffered the total loss of 26 Do 217s in August 1942 with 73 aircrew killed, 13 captured and 27 wounded or injured, while II./KG 40 had lost just six in the same period with 22 killed, one captured and four wounded. KG 2 had also suffered serious damage to another six aircraft.

KG 2's last loss of the month, from 1./KG 2, was the aircraft flown by *Fw.* Ferdinand Handel, which occurred during an attack on Penzance on 26 September. I. and III./KG 2 had moved to Evreux two days before and would then return to Holland the afternoon after the attack. KG 2 had lost *Oblt.* Heinz Bosse of 9./KG 2 (the crew was an equal mix of 9./KG 2 and 4./KG 40 personnel) the night before, probably shot down by Sqn Ldr Gerard Ranoszek of 307 Sqn during an attack on Truro. Handel fell victim to Flt Lt Denis Furse and Fg Off Johnnie Downes of 406 Sqn, their second Do 217 victory of 1942. The bomber crashed into the village of St Just with Handel and two crew killed, the remaining crew-member being captured.

Hans Wolff (2nd from right) and his crew.

Above: Fg Off Dennis Furse (by then a Squadron Leader) briefing aircrew of 604 Sqn in 1944. His navigator/radar operator, Plt Off Johnnie Downes, is seated left.



Oblt. Hans Wolff seen here as a POW in Canada after the award of his Deutsches Kreuz in Gold.

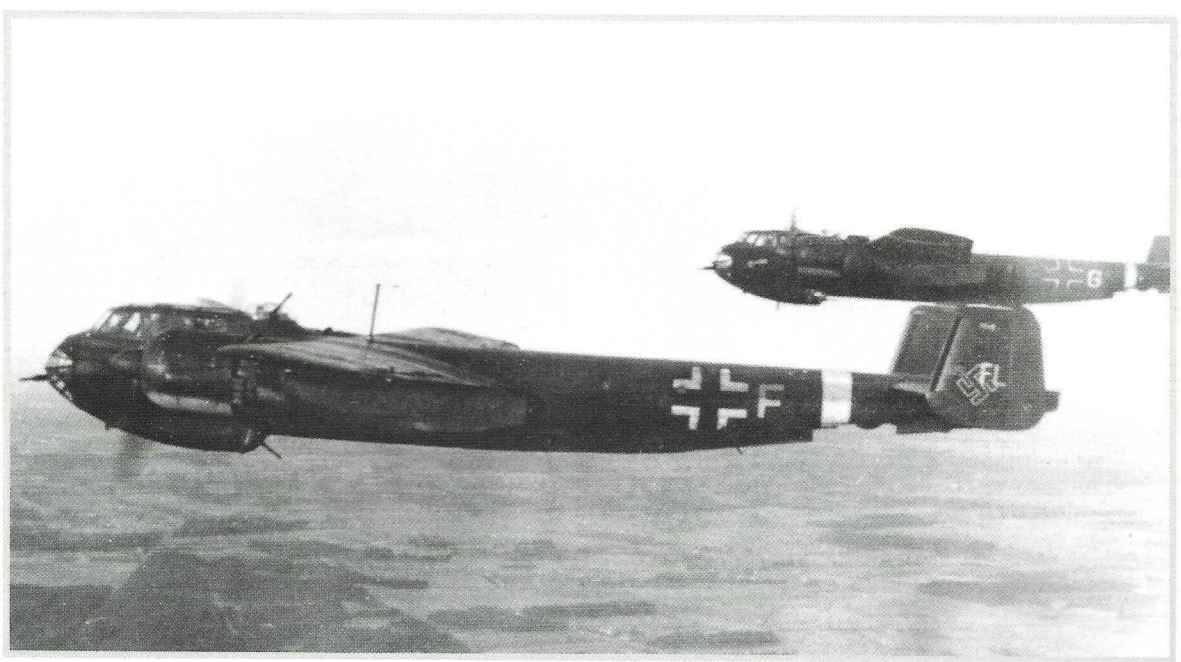
Sgt Ed Fox of 406 Sqn poses with the remains of the tail of the Do 217 E-4 of 1./KG 2 which crashed at St Just on 26 September 1942. Fox claimed a Ju 88 probably destroyed this night and, as Dennis Furse was not available, was used instead by the Press. (via Irwin).

Do 217 E-4, W.Nr. 4289, U5+LS, of 8./KG 2 which crashed on Southend airfield, 26 October 1942. Uffz. Rudolf Schumann and his crew all died after the cockpit struck a brick wall, the debris from which can be seen in the foreground.

October 1942 was a quieter month with the only combat loss for both *Geschwader* coming on 26 October. *Uffz.* Rudolf Schumann of 8./KG 2 had been briefed to carry out a daylight attack on the Skefko Ball Bearing Company factory in Luton. However, on approaching the coast, the weather deteriorated so much that the crew abandoned the planned attack and crossed the coast at Southend at 200 ft, dropped their bombs near Rochford Hospital and then, turning steeply, flew at very low level over RAF Rochford. They were engaged by ground defences which apparently killed Schumann and the aircraft immediately crash-landed, skidding along the ground until it hit a brick building. Three of the crew were killed in the crash but the radio operator, *Gefr.* Heinz Kautz, was thrown clear only to die of his injuries on 25 January 1943.

There would be five more Do 217s to be lost before the month was over. On 31 October 1942, Fw 190 fighter-bombers attacked Canterbury en masse in daylight and that night two waves of bombers attacked the cathedral city again. Two Do 217s from 7./KG 2 were lost in the first wave, one of them also being recorded as coming from 6./KG 40, both crashing in the sea, while three from I./KG 2 were lost in the second wave. Three were claimed by 29 Sqn with Sqn Ldr Bob Braham and Fg Off George Pepper in the first wave, with Pepper claiming one more in the second wave. This was the aircraft flown by *Ofw.* Peter Metzenroth of 3./KG 2 which broke up in the air over Bridge near Canterbury, the bulk of the aircraft hitting the ground at a steep angle after which the bombs exploded causing a crater 30 ft deep. The bodies of Metzenroth and one other were recovered but the remaining two crew are still missing.

November 1942 would be much quieter for the Do 217 crews as on 8 November 1942 the Allies landed in Morocco and Algeria in 'Operation Torch'. The German



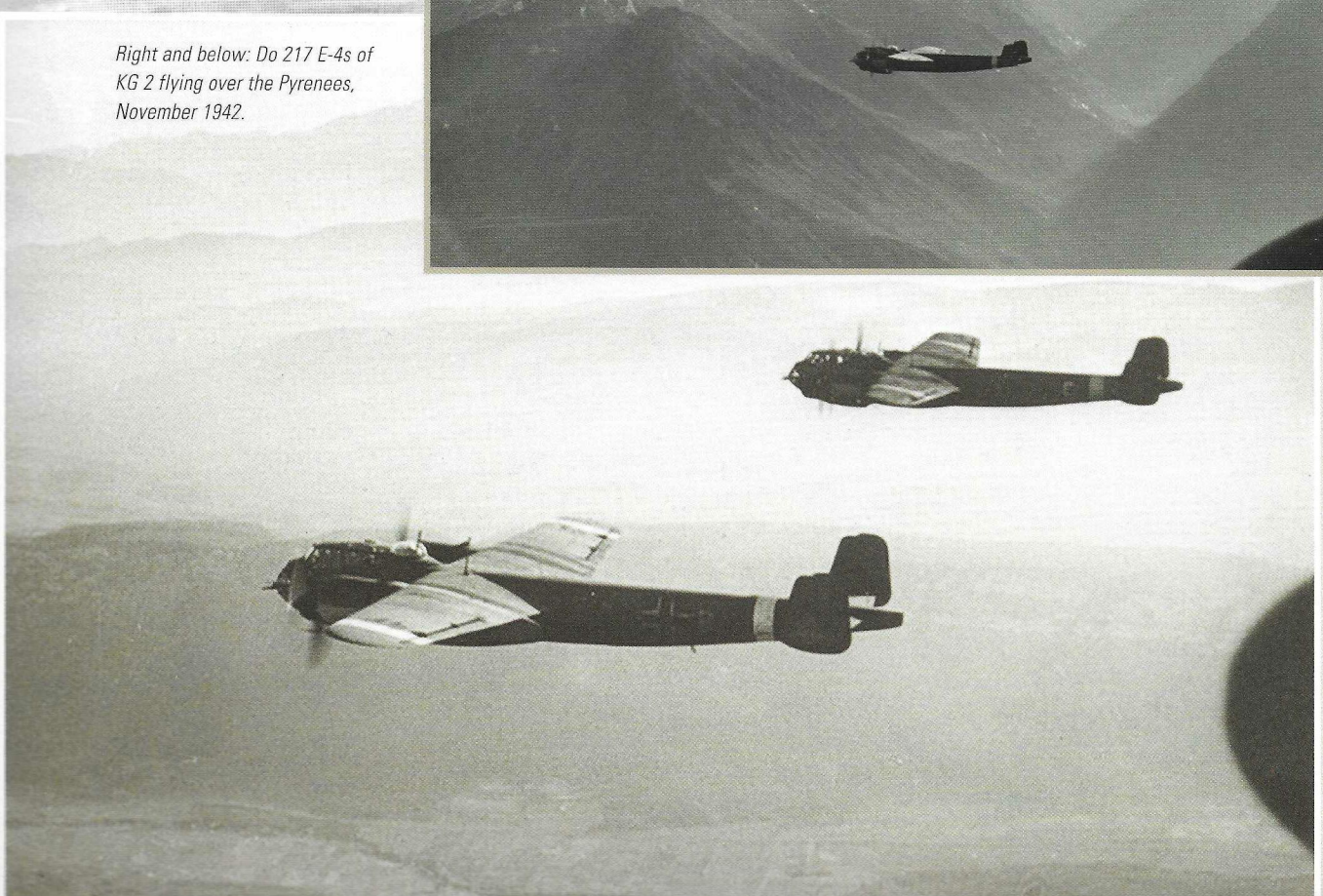
Do 217 E-4, U5+FL, of 3./KG 2 carrying the tail band showing that it is part of Operation Stockdorf, November 1942. The aircraft beyond it is believed to be U5+GS of 8./KG 2 due to the badge on the nose. W.Nr. 4377, U5+FL, was lost on the night of 8 February 1943 attacking London.

response was named 'Operation *Stockdorf*' and saw all three *Gruppen* of KG 2 and II./KG 40 moving to south-west France in response to the threat of an invasion in southern France. *Uffz*. Anton Ries and his crew, now flying with 9./KG 2, related the following:

> 'On the morning of 8 November 1942, crews from III./KG 2 were awakened unexpectedly at 0500 hrs and told to prepare to leave for Bordeaux-Mérignac. The aircraft took off singly at 0700 hrs onwards. In each case the senior ground mechanic flew in the aircraft in addition to the crew and in some cases even a sixth man such as an *Oberwerkmeister* was carried. A day or so later after having been reinforced by several crews from other units, the *Gruppe* took off from Bordeaux with a strength of 36 aircraft to make a propaganda flight over southern France. Bombs were not carried. The aircraft flew at 7,000 ft in *Gruppe* formation on a course Pyrenees-Toulouse-Rhone estuary-Marseilles-Toulon-Bordeaux. When over Toulouse they were joined by a second formation of 36 aircraft which included all available aircraft of I./KG 2 and for the remainder of the flight 72 aircraft flew together. After having spent a week at Bordeaux, III./KG 2 transferred to Toulouse/Francazal where they remained about a fortnight. IV.*Gruppe* of several other *Geschwader* equipped with Ju 88s were also

Do 217 E-4, W.Nr. 5562, U5+LS, showing the Operation Stockdorf recognition markings. On 9 March 1943, this aircraft suffered an engine failure shortly after taking off to attack Hull and was destroyed in the crash-landing at Alsmeer. Fw. Wilhelm Haase and his crew were all injured.

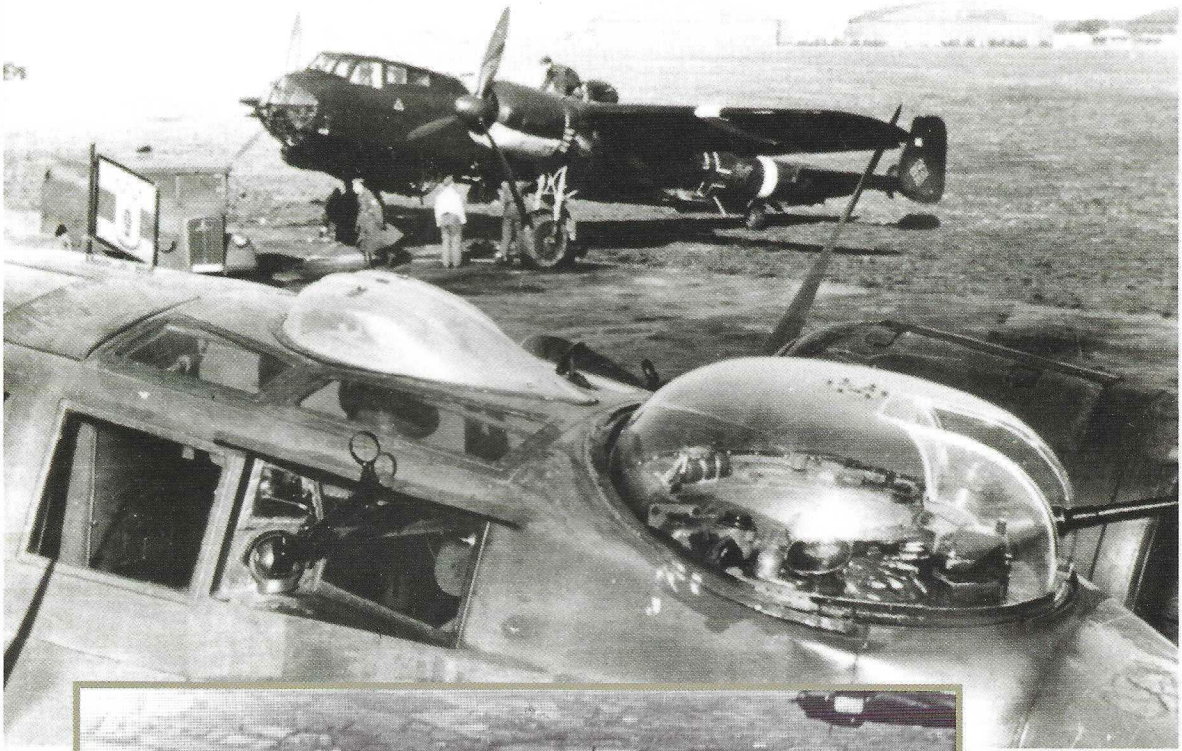
Right and below: Do 217 E-4s of KG 2 flying over the Pyrenees, November 1942.

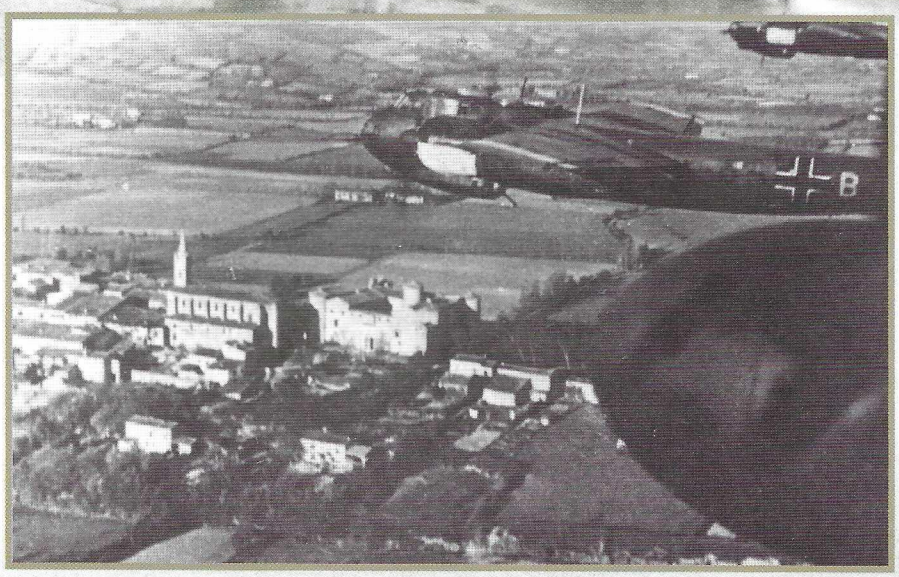


Do 217 E-4s of 8./KG 2. The furthest, U5+KS, is still in Operation Stockdorf markings while the nearest aircraft carries the 8.Staffel pennant (affixed to the canopy roof), usually denoting the Staffelkapitän's aircraft – who at that time was Hptm. Walter Scheiner.

Below: The badge of 8./KG 2 seen in the pennant at right.

Below: Do 217 E-4s of 9./KG 2 taxying out. The aircraft second from left is U5+LT and the next aircraft along is U5+FT, both having the last two letters on the tail. They also have a fuselage band but no evidence of Stockdorf engine and wing markings.

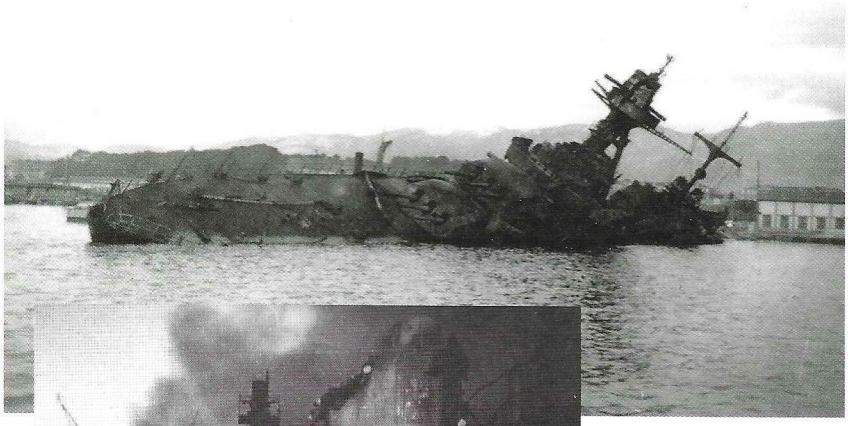




Left: German bombers were meant to both show a presence during Operation Stockdorf – hence the medium to low-level flying – and to prevent the scuttling of the French Fleet in Toulon.

stationed at Toulouse and during this period a constant state of readiness was imposed. At 0300 hrs on 26 November, a coded message was received ordering III./KG 2 to despatch aircraft to Toulon to prevent the French fleet from putting to sea. The signal was sent in code by radio as the teleprinter lines were out of action allegedly due to sabotage. It was received by the *Obergefreiter* on duty who it appears failed to make sense of it and took no further action. The first time the *Gruppenkommandeur* knew of the matter was at 0600 hrs when the *Fliegerkorps* enquired how many aircraft of the *Gruppe* were over Toulon. History does not relate what happened to the *Obergefreiter*.'

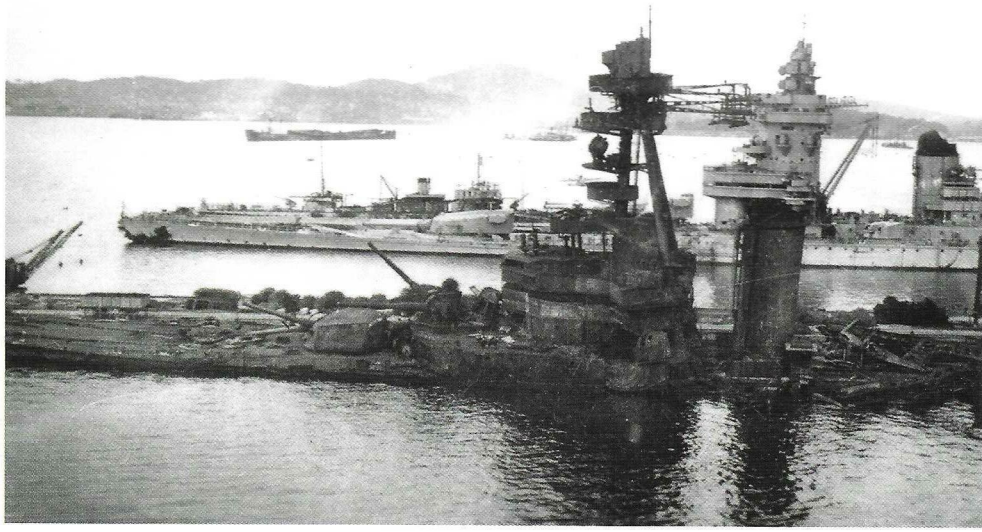
This latter aspect was of great embarrassment to the Germans as on 27 November 1942, despite the best efforts of the 7th Panzer Division and 2nd SS Panzer Division to prevent it, 77 vessels including three French battleships, seven cruisers, 15 destroyers, 13 torpedo boats, six sloops, 12 submarines, nine patrol boats, 48 other miscellaneous ships and four cranes were scuttled, set ablaze or destroyed. Thirty-nine ships were captured but most of them had been sabotaged. Having arrived the previous evening with two ground crew, *Uffz*. Max Reuthe of 6./KG 40 recorded taking off from Cognac at 0653 hrs that day on his first operational flight of the war to mine Toulon Harbour and returned to Soesterberg, with the same two ground crew, that evening.



Above: The French cruiser Marseillaise *after being scuttled at Toulon, 27 November 1942.*

Left: The burning remains of the cruiser Dupleix.

Below: Heavy cruiser Colbert *and, behind it, the battleship* Strasbourg.



After a further period of inactivity, III./KG 2 returned to Deelen a few days later and by 3 December 1942 the Do 217s had all returned to Holland. Just one aircraft, from 10./KG 2 flown by *Fw*. Leonard Müllegger, was lost on an armed reconnaissance of the Bay of Biscay on 10 November 1942 for reasons not known; II./KG 40 returned unscathed.

The only loss occurring in November 1942 was on the 5th when *Gefr*. Heinrich Kuhlmann of 8./KG 2 carried

Oblt. Josef Steudel's accident at Deelen on 5 November 1942 in Do 217 E-4, W.Nr. 4372, U5+HT, whilst performing a test flight.

out a low-level attack on Lydd in Kent. A direct hit to the cockpit by a burst of light Flak saw the Do 217 immediately hit trees and break up over a wide area three miles west of Folkestone; all four crew were killed. The same day almost saw the end of *Oblt.* Josef Steudel of 8./KG 2:

> 'I did not take part in the mission in southern France as I was in hospital at Deelen. On 5 November I was test-flying an aircraft after repairs [W.Nr. 4372 U5+HT]. During the flight the propellers on the starboard engine failed and I had to land immediately. Just before touchdown, I pulled back on the throttle but the starboard engine continued to run on high R.P.M. The result was the aircraft tipped onto its port wing and the damage was 80%. The *Prüfmeister* sitting next to me [Karl Eisenmann] and I were both injured. I suffered a broken leg. There was a certain amount of good fortune in this misfortune because Ella and I wanted to marry on 14 December and that is what happened. Before I went home, the cast was removed and I could walk normally, though with some difficulty.'

The first combat loss of December 1942 was *Uffz.* Hugo Bethlow and his crew from 6./KG 40 who failed to return from an unspecified mission. Then, four days later, *Oblt.* Erich Hackel of 7./KG 2 failed to return from a mission to the Humber, probably shot down by Flt Lt Miroslav Mansfeld of 68 Sqn who claimed the only destruction of a Do 217 that night 50 miles east of Cromer.

However, December 1942 would see an increase in what were known as *Pirateneinsatz* – lone daylight attacks on specific targets. A German airman captured in August 1942 best described such attacks:

> 'Suitable targets are selected many weeks in advance and intensive preparations are made. Very careful thought is given to the choice of route and large-scale maps and any available photographs of the target itself and the approaches to it are closely studied. III./KG 2 even had a special sand-table prepared for use in connection with pirate raids. Pains are taken to work out a route which runs over flat country and which avoids any hills or other natural or artificial obstructions. Towns are studiously avoided. A hand-drawn sketch is frequently made covering a strip eight miles wide on either side of the route and all of the crew are expected to memorise the landmarks along the entire route. As many as three aircraft may be despatched to attack an important objective, but it is considered preferable to decide upon several different targets to be attacked by individual aircraft on the same day.'

At the start of December 1942, *Oblt.* Mano Manowarda had just returned to 3./KG 2 from training crews of 15./KG 6 on the Do 217 at Chartres in France. He flew an attack on Sunderland and Hartlepool on 12 and 14 December 1942 but on 16 December 1942 he flew his first *Pirateneinsatz*.

On the afternoon of 16 December, 27 aircraft took off to carry out *Störangriff* attacks between Kent and Dorset.

Fourteen aircraft turned back due to the weather, including one Do 217 from 8./KG 2 flown by *Uffz.* Ulrich Bachmann which suffered engine failure and force-landed near Caen. Between 1310 and 1458 hrs, 12 towns were attacked, namely Reading (1408 hrs), Dymchurch (1330 hrs), Hythe (1335 hrs), Newbury (1404 hrs), Littlehampton (1458 hrs), Dorchester (1310 hrs) and Amberley (1420 hrs). *Ritterkreuz*-holder *Oblt.* Wilhelm Schmitter of 4./KG 40 reported attacking Eastbourne at 1406 hrs while *Oblt.* Mano Manowarda attacked Wareham in Dorset at 1340 hrs. Of this attack, in 1980 he wrote:

> 'I am still today worried about a low-level attack (by the order of the *Führer*) on the small town of Wareham. There I dropped four 500-kg bombs precisely. Even now I can see the people going to the market without any air raid warning being heard and in particular a mother with a small child at her right hand. I dropped the bombs (fuses without delay), banked to port and high up so that the explosions did not hit us. I cannot forget this terror attack...'

A report filed by the Dorset Constabulary the following day acknowledges the attack but the outcome was slightly different to what Mano thought:

> 'At 1333 hrs on 16 December 1942, a Do 217 machine-gunned the town of Wareham and dropped four 500-kg armour-piercing bombs. Five dwelling houses were demolished and approximately 80 damaged. A gasometer was burnt out and damage was caused to overhead telephone wires. Casualties two persons seriously injured, 12 slightly injured.'

The day after that the Chief Constable of Dorset sent his daily report to the Home Office. His report listed three attacks by German bombers – in addition to Mano's attack, there was an almost simultaneous attack on Bridport:

> 'At 1345 hrs, an enemy plane flying from west to east dropped four bombs on Bridport. Three of the bombs exploded and caused extensive damage to buildings. The fourth bomb, a 500-kg, failed to explode and is situated near the porch of the Westminster Bank and is covered in rubble. Casualties three killed, seven seriously injured and 10 slightly injured. The A35 road Dorchester to Exeter was closed to traffic 500 yds east and west of the Town Hall but was reopened again as from 1500 hrs on the 17th.'

Three females were killed – Emily Trevett (68), Elizabeth Norman (80) and two-year-old Maureen Wilcox.

However, it was the attack on Poole by *Oblt.* Ernst Schneiderbauer of 3./KG 2 at 1332 hrs that was more effective, as the report reads:

> 'At 1323 hrs ... a Do 217 flying from north-east to south-west at 1,500 ft machine-gunned and dropped four

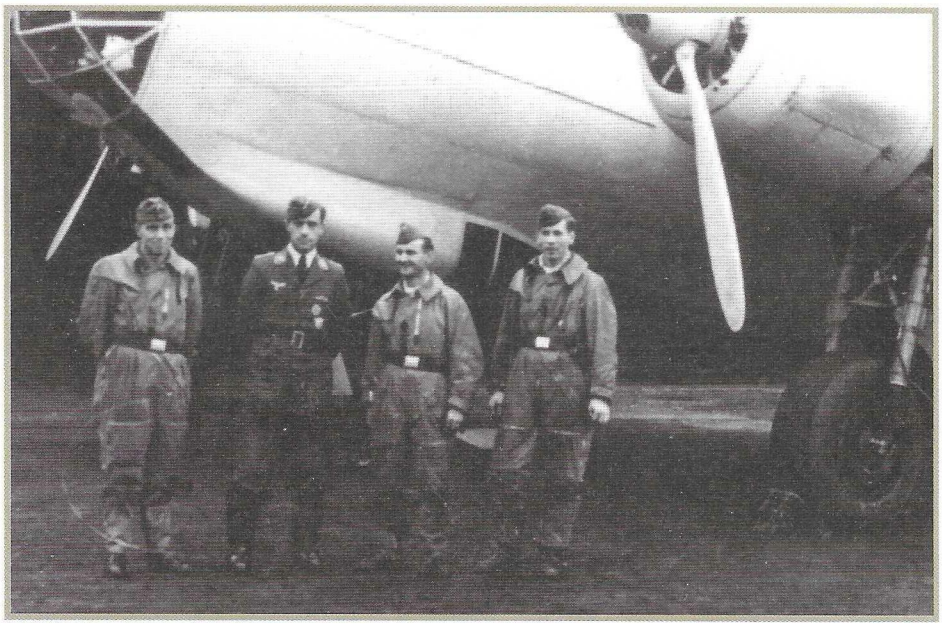
Oblt. Ernst Schneiderbauer's Do 217 E-4, W.Nr. 5441, U5+BL, camouflaged for 'Pirateneinsatz' (Pirate attacks) – lone daylight attacks on specific British targets.

500-kg bombs on the harbour area at Poole. A number of workshops and stores were demolished and partly demolished and warehouses, workshops, stores, dwelling houses, shops and other buildings were damaged. One naval vessel was sunk and others damaged. Two persons killed, three seriously injured and 23 slightly injured. The Dorset Foundry factory which is engaged on work of national importance was one of those damaged.'

The bombs landed close to the Poole Gasworks and hit the Dorset Foundry in Thames Street and the quayside site of Newmans Shipyard. The ship that was sunk was the *Vixen* and those killed were Bill Matthews (14) and George Davis (37).

Schneiderbauer had only joined his current unit in the summer of 1942. Before then he had flown Fw 200s with I./KG 40 on armed reconnaissance missions over the Atlantic. By the time he was shot down and captured in March 1943, he had over 100 operational flights to his name and listed Lincoln, Canterbury, Grimsby, Plymouth, Portsmouth, Southampton, London and Swansea as his night-time targets. However, he had also flown a number of attacks by daylight which included Norwich, Chatham, Southampton, Bexhill and Chelmsford. Another daylight attack was against Poole and for which the British intelligence report stated:

'The Poole incident took place on 16 December 1942 and was directed against a small shipbuilding yard. Four 500-kg bombs were dropped which the pilot thought straddled the target. This incident is confirmed from British sources from which it is learned that at 1337 hrs on the day in question three bombs were dropped on the quayside at Poole and one in the main harbour.'



Ernst Schneiderbauer and his crew – Ofw. Gregor Eilbrecht (flight engineer); Schneiderbauer; Ofw. Wilhelm Zacharias (observer) (injured 8 February 1943); and Uffz. Hans Weber (radio operator). All but Zacharias would be taken prisoner on 12 March 1943.

Another dramatic, yet tragic attack was carried out by *Oblt.* Rolf Häusner of 7./KG 2 who attacked a train from Guildford approaching Bramley Railway Station in Hampshire at 1410 hrs. A young girl on the train wrote afterwards:

'When we slowed down on our approach to Bramley Station, I suddenly heard machine gun fire hitting the

train. On looking up I had a fleeting glance of a plane out of the window headed for Guildford. It was very low, just above the trees. Then there was a big explosion and the train rocked on the rails. The door on the far side was blown out and the glass flew across the compartment. I realised at once what had happened but then everything went completely quiet and still. I got my hands over my face before the glass blew in and had no bad damage to my face, only nicks, although my hands were cut. Many people were not so lucky and had bad facial injuries, several losing eyes.'

In 2008, a plaque was placed at the former railway station of Bramley and Wonersh remembering the eight who were killed – the youngest being 17-year-old Michael Evans – and 36 injured. 24 hours later *Oblt.* Häusner and his crew were killed when they flew into a hillside while attacking York. In the wreckage of their aircraft the RAF found a 1:500,000 map of southern England with a rectangle marked south of Guildford, precisely the location of Bramley.

If these were successful attacks that day, there was one that was not. At 1355 hrs a Beaufighter of 141 Sqn crewed by Fg Off Bill Cook and Flt Sgt Len Warne had been scrambled from RAF Ford in West Sussex but, seeing nothing, headed back for base where, at 1448 hrs, they spotted a lone Do 217 flying west at ground level.

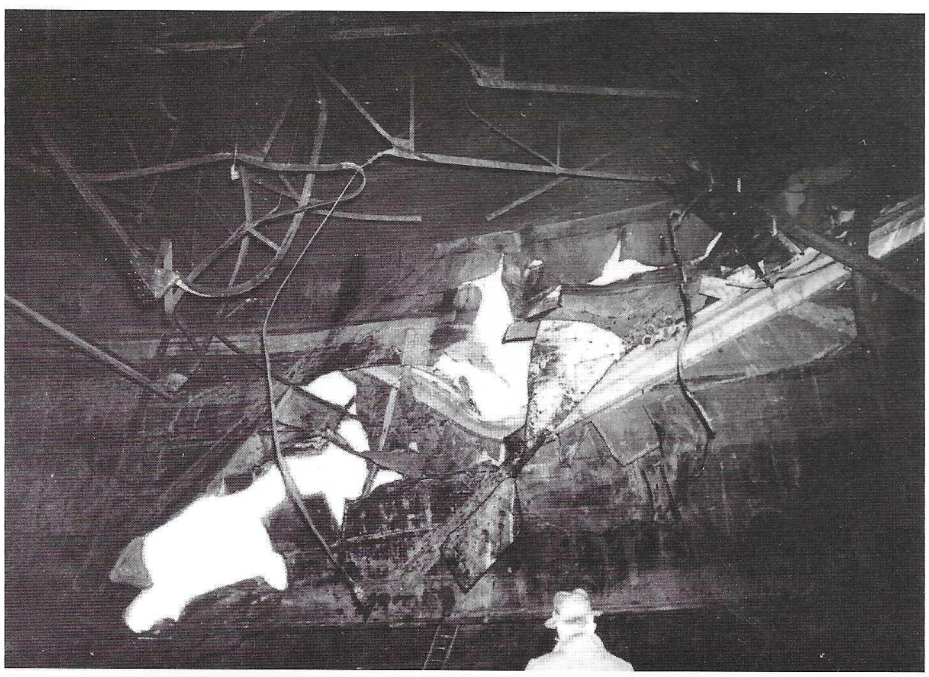
'At about 800 ft I saw an e/a east of Middleton flying west parallel with the coast at sea level. Recognising it as a Do 217 I went after it at once endeavouring to lose height and converge on its track as it turned inland over Middleton on a course of 310°. The e/a evidently saw us when it was a quarter of a mile inland and after firing tracer at the houses turned first onto 10°, then 310° and then 240°, all the time flying over the rooftops at height varying between 30 and 50 ft. We had flown on a course of 190° to the coast and then 300° to cut e/a off on its course of 240° and succeeded in getting half a mile behind him. We had dropped to 150 ft and had caught up to about 400 yds behind him on a course of 240° as we approached Bognor. There was slight Bofors fire which burst above e/a and 100 yds to starboard. E/a was flying at 180-200 mph and we were doing 230-250 ASI. I did not want to go below 150 ft so as to be at an advantage when e/a climbed, as he would have to. Just before going over Bognor when about half a mile from the coast, e/a still flying at 30-50 ft turned starboard. We followed still gaining on him and he at once turned sharply to port to fly south-south heading straight for the gasometer. He evidently saw that his starboard wing was likely to hit the gasometer and he tried to correct his turn by throttling back and swinging to starboard. The tip of his starboard wing, however, struck the gasometer slewing him round to strike the ground and catch fire as we flew over the gasometer and before we could open fire.'

The remains of W.Nr. 4382, this view shows an undercarriage leg with a burnt out tyre. (via Saunders)

Uffz. Ernst Dittrich of 4./KG 40 and his crew were on their first operational flight and were all killed after a chase which had lasted a mere two minutes. Sadly, bombs from his aircraft were thrown from the crash into Victoria Avenue and Hillsboro Road, mortally wounding 65-year-old Harold Booker at the former and 26-year-old Georgina Hepton at the latter.

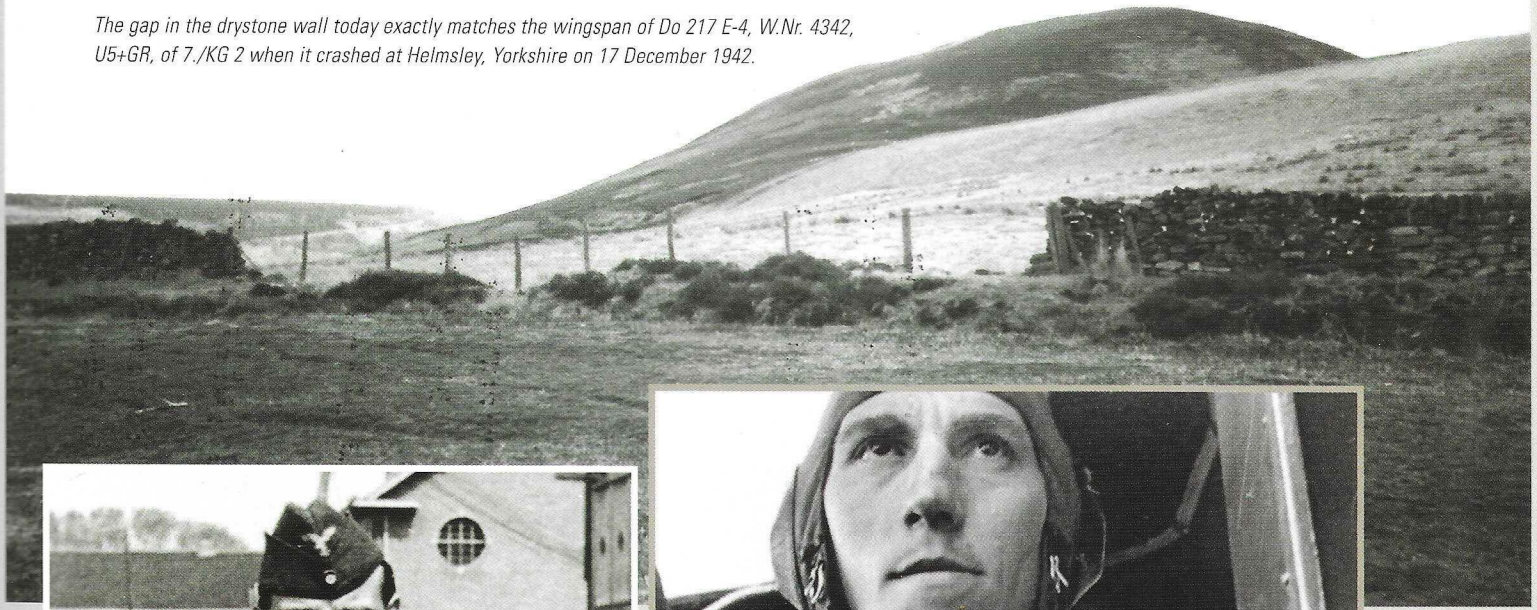
The remaining two weeks of 1942 would see more attacks in the north-east. On the night of 17 December 1942, it was the turn of York. Although Mano Manowarda recorded successfully dropping a 1,200-kg and two 500-kg bombs on the target, aircraft flown by *Fw.* Wilhelm Stoll of 2./KG 2 and the experienced Rolf Häusner, who had by now been promoted to *Hauptmann* and given command of 7./KG 2, inexplicably flew into hillsides on the North Yorkshire moors, killing all eight men. The evidence of Häusner's crash is still visible at Hawnby with a gap in the drystone wall he hit – exactly the wingspan of a Do 217.

The following day saw yet more *Störangriffe* by Do 217s. Around 1000 hrs on 18 December 1942, three Dorniers took off on a weather reconnaissance and nuisance attack between Eastbourne and the Isle of Wight. At 1150 hrs, one of the aircraft dropped four 500-kg bombs on Eastbourne, the bombs hitting shops in Terminus Road that were packed with Christmas shoppers. It took 48 hours to release the last of those trapped but still 18 were killed, 37 injured and another nine injured by falling masonry during rescue attempts. Three minutes later, a second Do 217 claimed to have attacked Hastings and damage was also recorded at the Southern Railway Engineering Works at Ashford in Kent. However, retribution was swift (but not one-sided as it would appear) when at the same time that Hastings was being attacked, *Uffz.* Walter Seideler of II./KG 40 was intercepted south of Brighton by two Hawker Typhoons of 486 Sqn:



The damage caused by Do 217 E-4, W.Nr. 4382, F8+FM, of 4./KG 40 which collided with the Bognor Gasholder, 16 December 1942.

The gap in the drystone wall today exactly matches the wingspan of Do 217 E-4, W.Nr. 4342, U5+GR, of 7./KG 2 when it crashed at Helmsley, Yorkshire on 17 December 1942.



Killed in the crash was Ofw. Hartwig Hupe – radio operator ...

... Ofw. Ernst Weiderer – flight engineer ...

... and Hptm. Rolf Häusner – pilot.

'About six miles south of Brighton and Hove at 800 ft saw a Do 217 E-2 (recognised by dorsal upper turret) ahead flying at 4-500 ft. Red Section (Plt Off G G Thomas, Sgt R W Penny) turned to starboard and gave chase. Plt Off Thomas opened fire with several bursts observing strikes on the fuselage and underside of starboard wing and the e/a immediately dived to the deck followed by Red 1; it then pulled up into cloud. In the subsequent chase Red 1 caught about three glimpses of the e/a as it made use of all available cloud cover. Return fire was experienced from both the dorsal upper turret and rear ventral position but no damage was sustained by Red 1, the shells passing to starboard and slightly above. Although it would appear that the Dornier was only damaged, subsequent findings by Air Sea Rescue Walrus and high speed launches indicate that a Dornier was indeed destroyed as portions of German parachute and fluorescence were picked up. Sgt Penny has not yet returned and wreckage seen floating indicates that two aircraft had apparently crashed into the sea about 3-400 yds apart.'

Whether Sgt Russell Strode-Penny collided or shot down the Do 217 will never be known but its destruction was credited to Gordon Thomas.

The final Do 217 combat losses of 1942 came four days later. It was a day of yet more *Störangriffe*. Three Do 217s took off between 0810-0825 hrs on 22 December 1942: one flown by *Uffz.* Max Reuthe of 6./KG 40 reported attacking Great Yarmouth, the attack causing extensive damage with a number of fatalities, but one of the Do 217s, flown by *Lt.* Heinz-Wolf Krabbenhöft of 4./KG 40, failed to return, believed shot down by Flak half a mile off Caister by Sea. Around the same time three more Do 217s took off to carry out an armed reconnaissance between the Thames and the Isle of Wight, one aircraft attacking Lydd. Finally, a few minutes later, another three took off on a similar mission between the Channel and Hull with one aircraft attacking Tunbridge Wells, but all three returned. *Lt.* Eberhard Bergmann of 2./KG 2 failed to return from the first of these *Pirateneinsatz* attacks, the

only claim by the RAF again being by 486 Sqn. This time the Typhoons were flown by Fg Off 'Spike' Umbers and Flt Sgt Charles Gall:

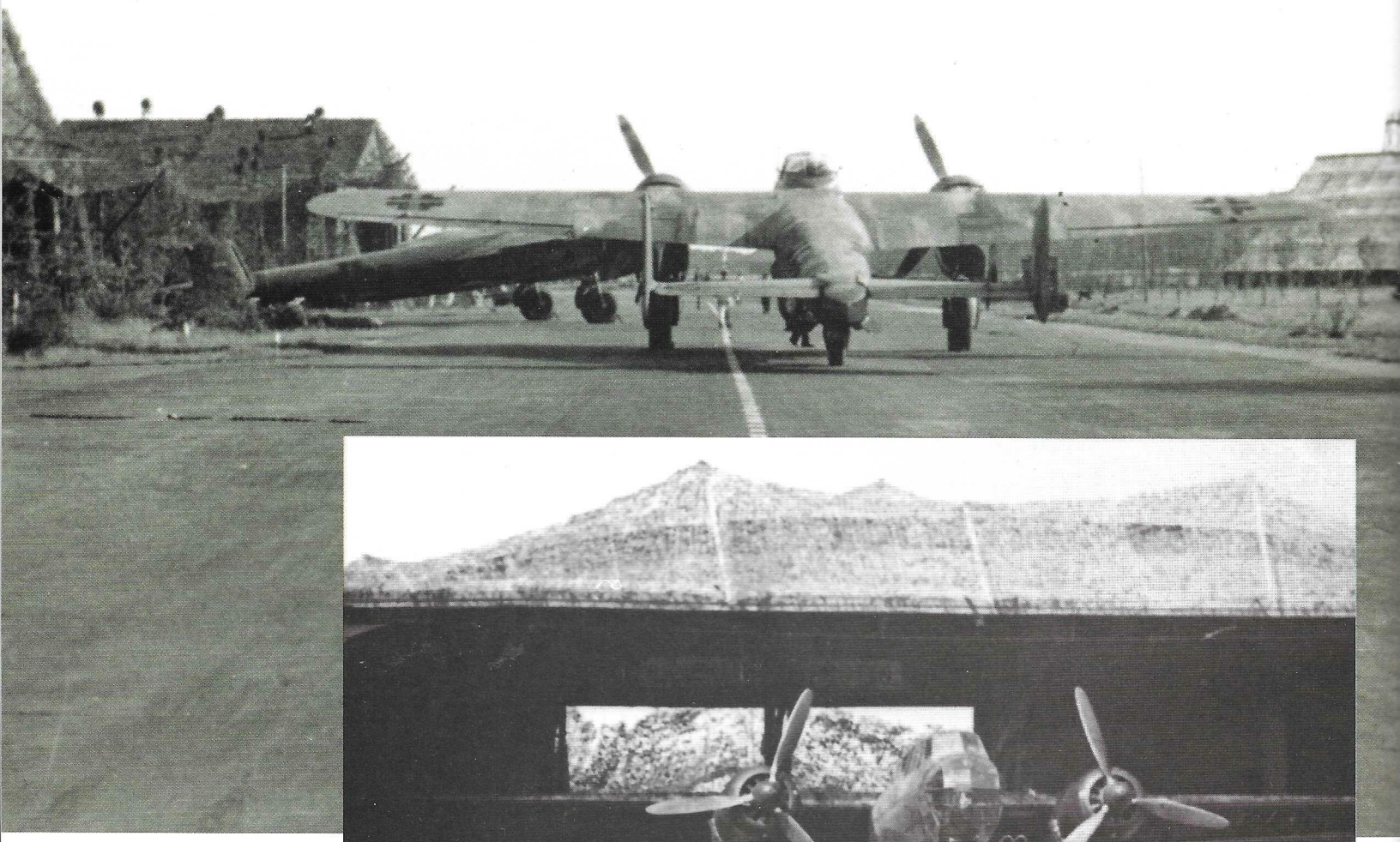
> 'Saw 5-6 miles away an aircraft flying on an easterly direction right down on the deck so low that the slipstream left a broad wake on the water. Blue Section made a diving turn to port closing to 400 yds one on each side of the aircraft at about 300 ft above. Immediately recognised as a Do 217 (the turret of the E-2 not seen) [both aircraft lost were Do 217 E-4s therefore with turrets] which turned on 180° apparently heading for home, at the same time jettisoning a mine. Blue 1 went ahead slightly and made a turn to port and approaching from the port quarter ahead opened fire observing strikes on the starboard engine which started to emit greyish black smoke. As he broke away Blue 2 attacked from a quarter astern to port and slightly above observing strikes on the fuselage and mainplane. Blue Section attacked again simultaneously from a quarter astern to port and starboard and strikes were again seen on the fuselage and mainplane. Various unrecognisable pieces broke away from the Dornier and passed above Blue Section. Return fire was experienced from upper dorsal gun position but no damage was sustained. As Blue Section broke away to position themselves for a further attack the Dornier's port engine and wing tanks burst into flames and blueish grey smoke was seen pouring from the starboard engine, fire spreading to the fuselage aft of the trailing edge. The final attack by Blue Section was from dead astern and for very short duration as almost simultaneously their ammunition ran out. The Dornier slowly lost height and speed until it struck the sea, disintegrating and leaving a big patch of fluorescence and some wreckage, in the middle of which one member of the crew was seen floating face downwards with his parachute streaming out on the water.'

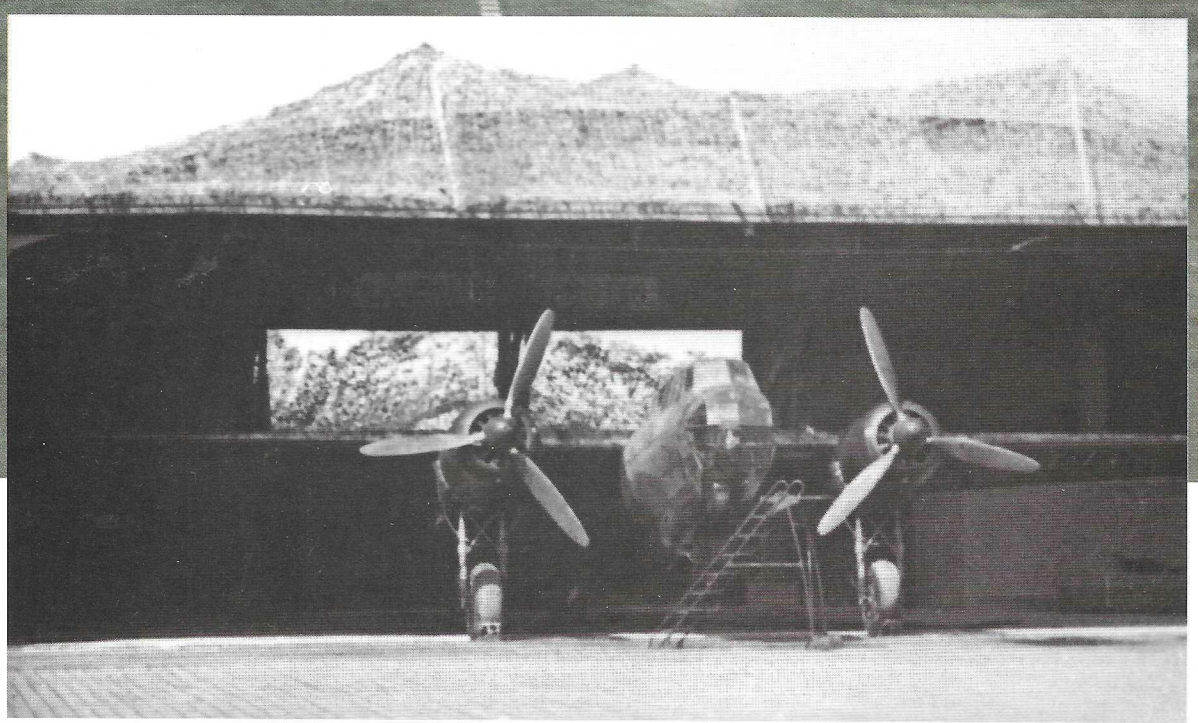
The aircraft crashed south-east of St. Catherine's Point on the Isle of Wight. There were no survivors from both of the Do 217s lost that morning.

These two Do 217s would be the last lost in combat in 1942, but the final loss was *Lt.* Hermann Brockhage and his crew from 1./KG 2 when, on a low-level training flight over the Zuider See on 30 December 1942, on returning to Gilze-Rijen he clipped a house at 94 Keizer Ottostraat, Bussum and crashed, killing himself and all aboard.

The year 1942 had been a hard one for KG 2 and II./KG 40 and it saw new horizons for other versions of the Do 217. 1943 would initially bring more of the same, as well as changes, especially for II./KG 40 whose association with the Do 217 would last only until the start of June 1943.

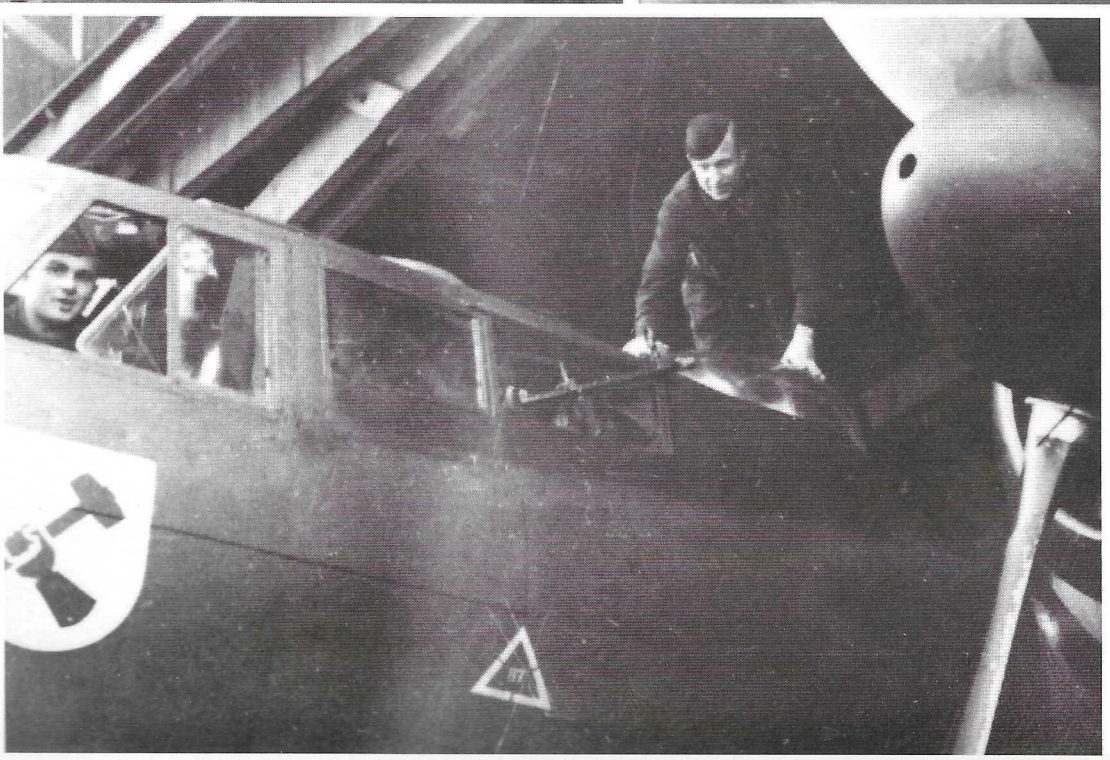
Heavily toned down Do 217 Es, presumably from KG 2, seen at Gilze-Rijen. Note the blacked-out wing and fuselage crosses.





Right: A Do 217 E-4 of III./KG 2, Gilze-Rijen, 1942.

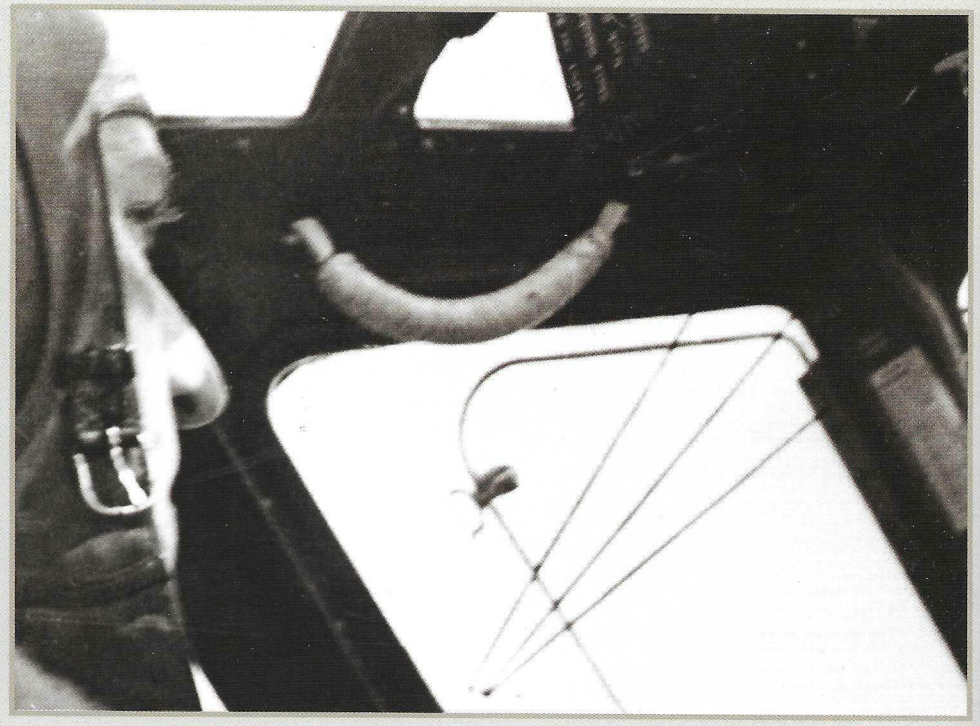
The aircraft of 7./KG 2 'sightseeing' Paris from the air, 1942.



Do 217 E-4, U5+BR, of 7./KG 2, Gilze-Rijen, 1942.

Crew about to board a Do 217 E-4 of 7./KG 2, 1942.

Below: An unidentified Do 217 E-4 photographed in 1942.



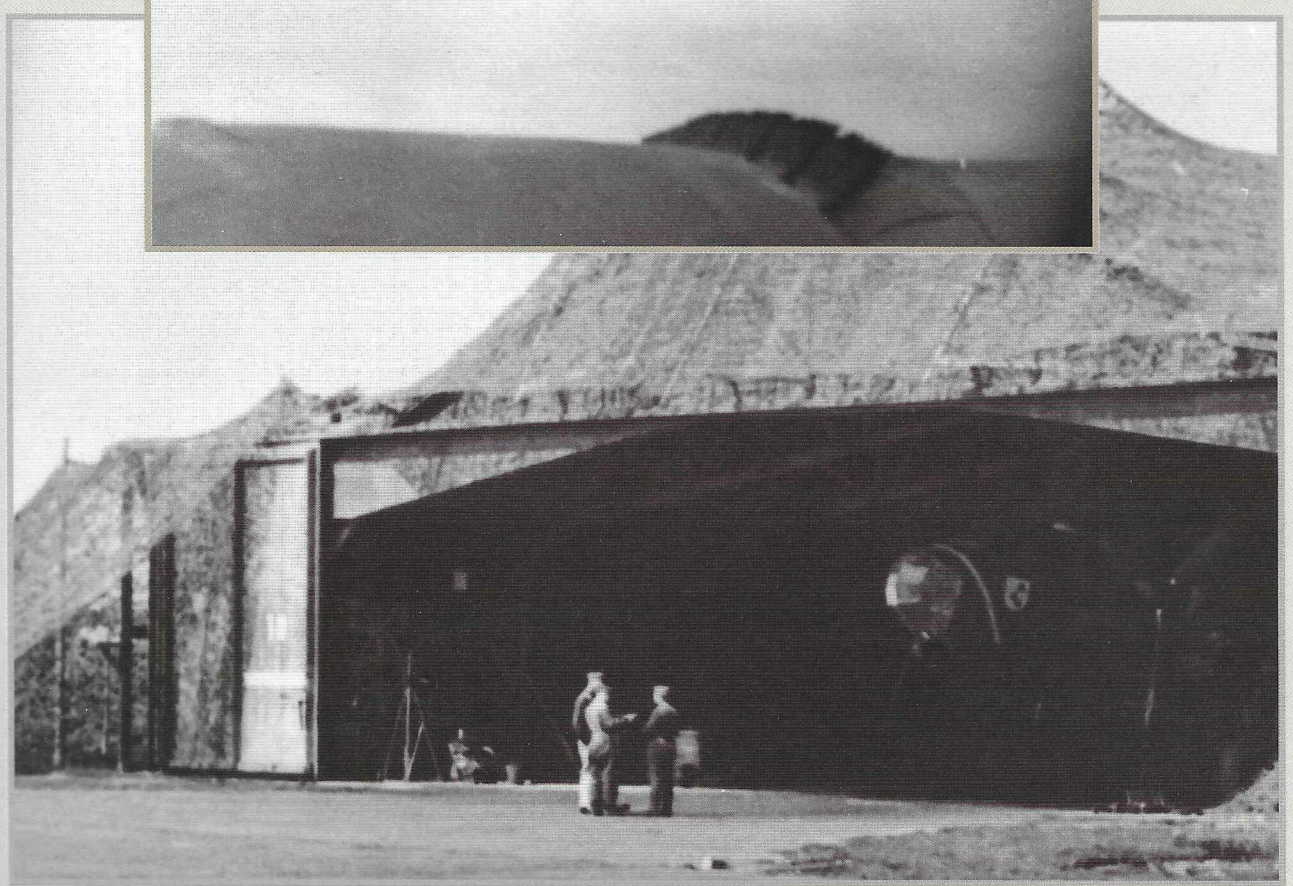
Oblt. Rolf Häusner of 7./KG 2 in the cockpit – note the lines used for diving angles on the cockpit window.

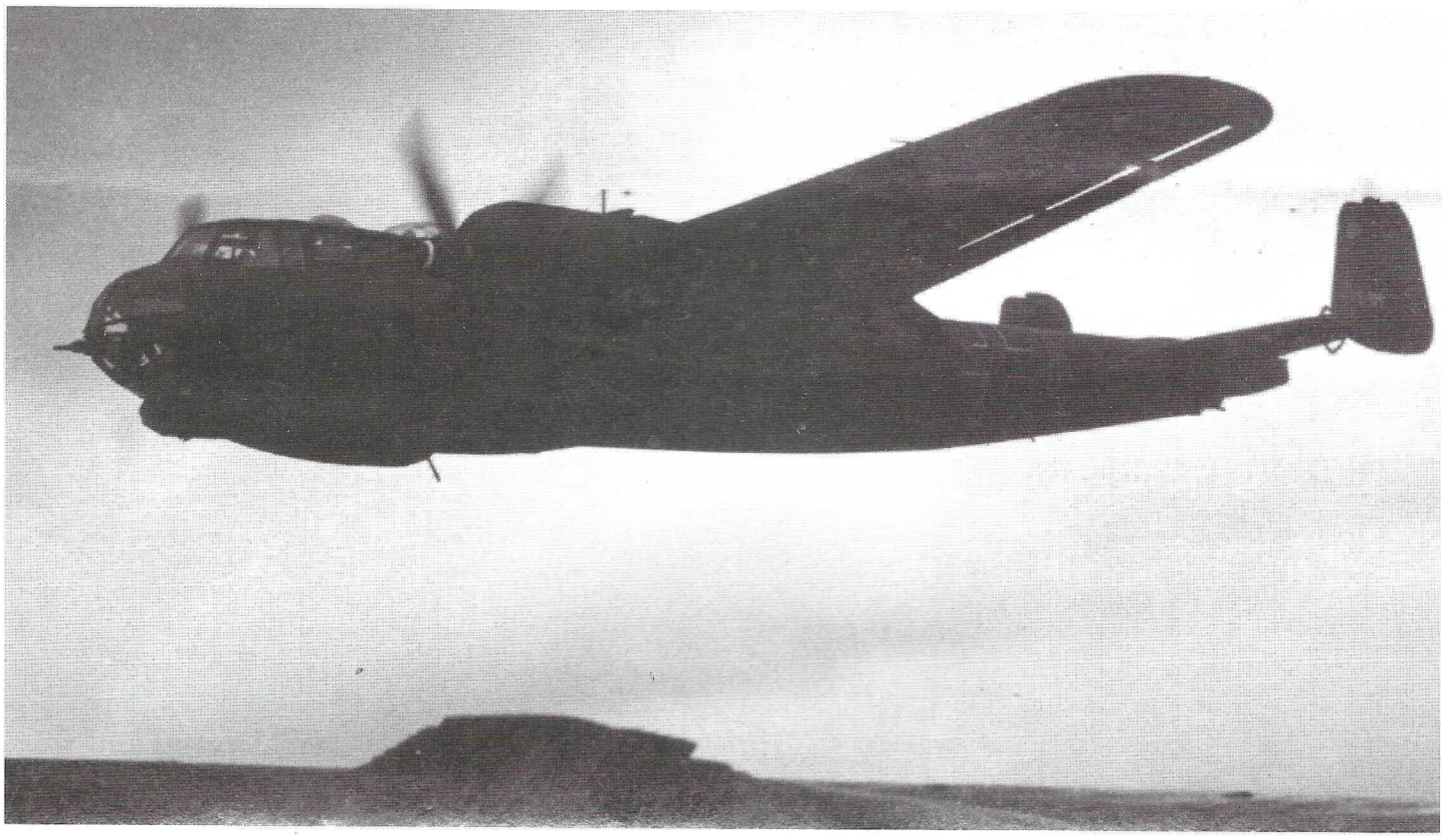
Left: Oblt. Rolf Häusner's gloved hand on the control column of his Do 217 E-4. Note the Revi gunsight.

Oblt. Rolf Häusner of 7./KG 2 speaking to air- and ground crew while behind is his Do 217 E-4, U5+BR.

Do 217 E-4s of III./KG 2 carrying out formation practice. Note that the 'Holzhammer' and diagonal band on the noses have been toned down.

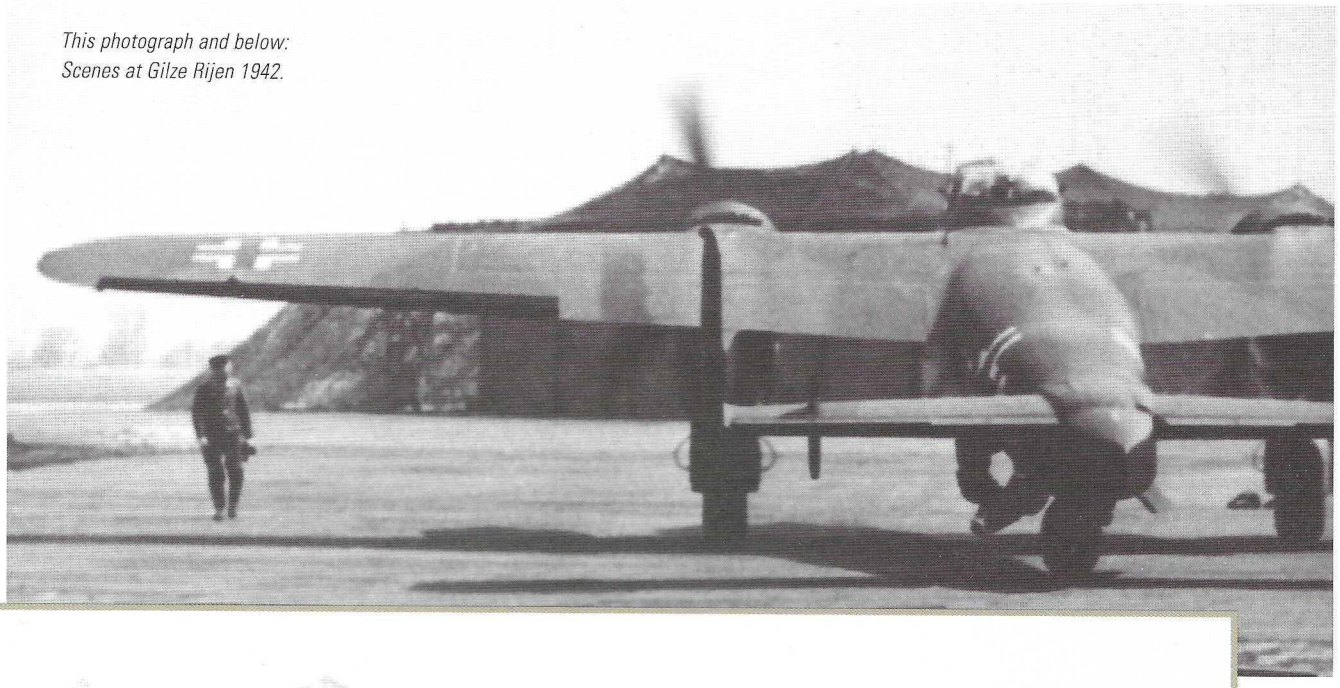
Below: The band and 'Holzhammer' emblem are clearly visible on this Do 217 E-4 of III./KG 2 at Gilze-Rijen, 1942.

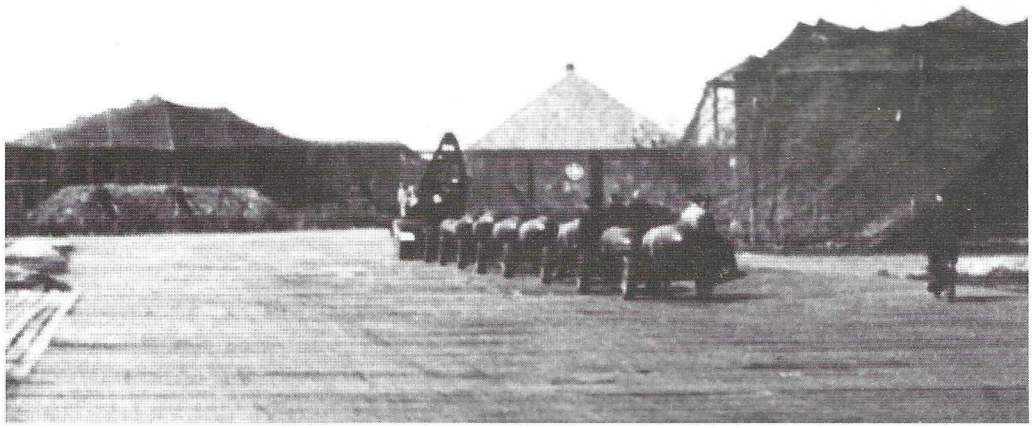




A Do 217 E-2 coded F8+IM of 4./KG 40 silhouetted against the evening sky. On 27 October 1941, W.Nr. 1126 force-landed at Quakenbrück after suffering 50% combat damage. Repaired and converted to an E-4, it was then recorded as suffering an engine failure on 22 January 1943 with 11./KG 2. The aircraft carries its code and mission markings on its tail fin.

This photograph and below:
Scenes at Gilze Rijen 1942.

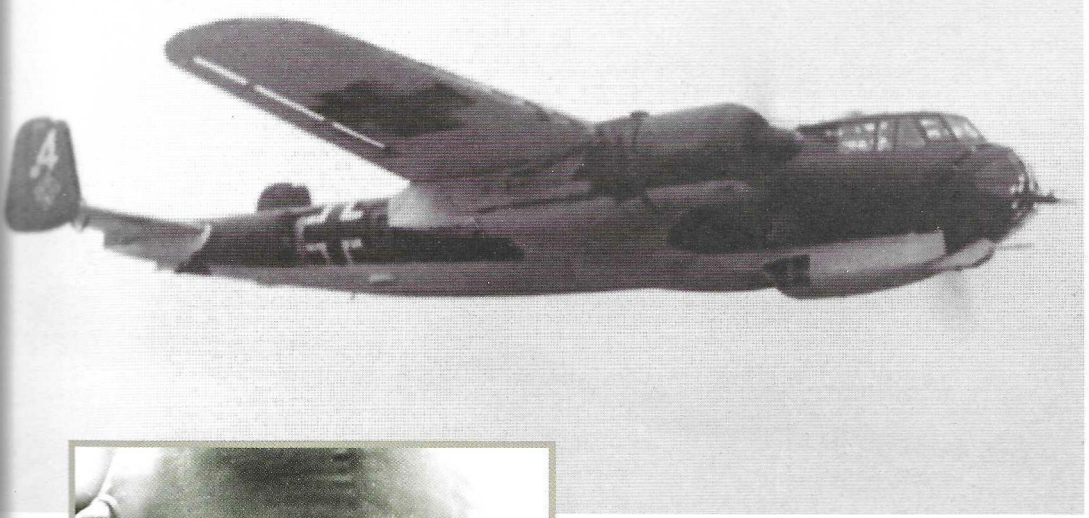




Bombs being delivered to III./KG 2, Gilze-Rijen, 1942.

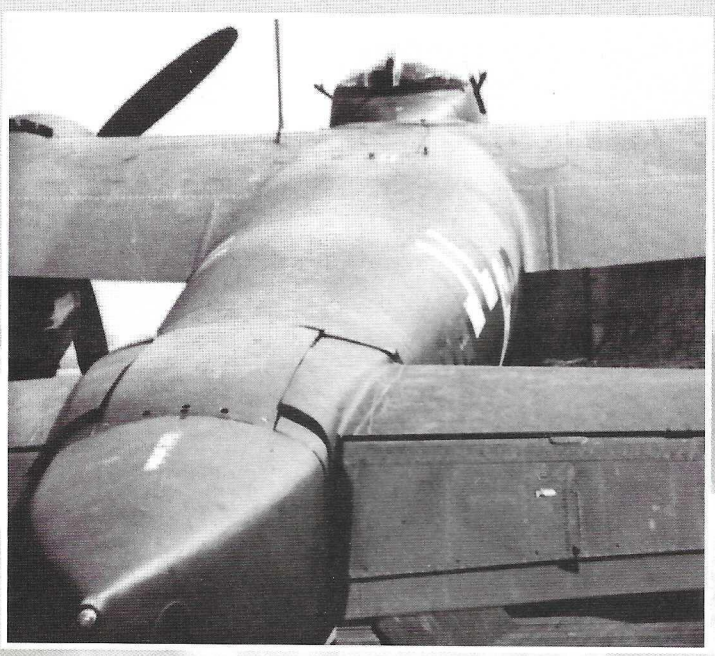
Maj. Kurt Leythäuser became Gruppenkommandeur of III./KG 2 on 1 May 1942.

A Do 217 E-4 believed to be from 8./KG 2 and coded U5+GS. The haphazard toning down and numeral on the tail is a puzzle.



Oblt. Rolf Häusner of 7./KG 2.

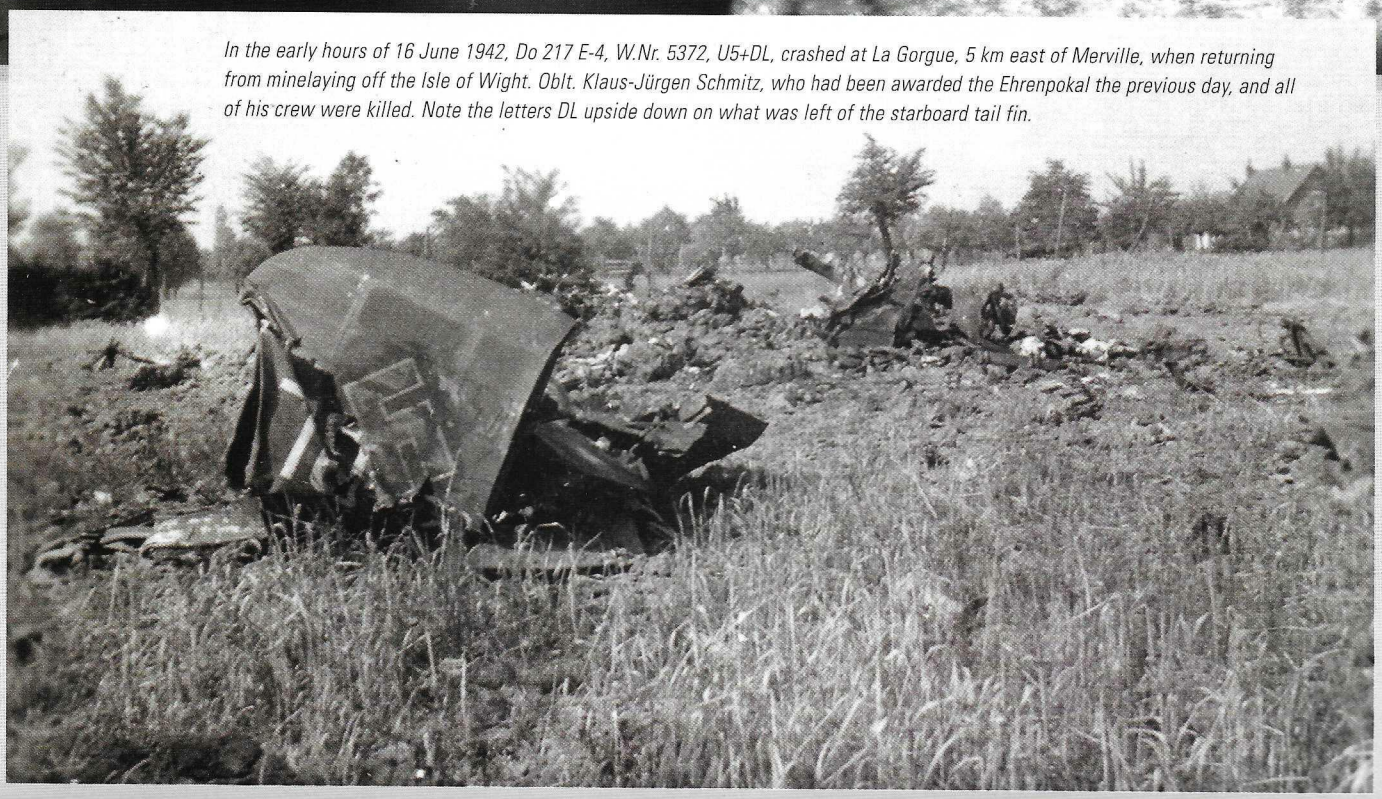
Uffz. Horst Arnscheidt of 7./KG 2 in the cockpit of Do 217 E-4, W.Nr. 5458, U5+GR. This aircraft was lost in action on 29 May 1942, being flown by Fw. Heinz Jaros.



Right: W.Nr. 5458, U5+GR, before its loss at the end of May 1942.

Below: A Do 217 E-4 of I./KG 2 carrying out training over the Bay of Biscay, June 1942.

In the early hours of 16 June 1942, Do 217 E-4, W.Nr. 5372, U5+DL, crashed at La Gorgue, 5 km east of Merville, when returning from minelaying off the Isle of Wight. Oblt. Klaus-Jürgen Schmitz, who had been awarded the Ehrenpokal the previous day, and all of his crew were killed. Note the letters DL upside down on what was left of the starboard tail fin.

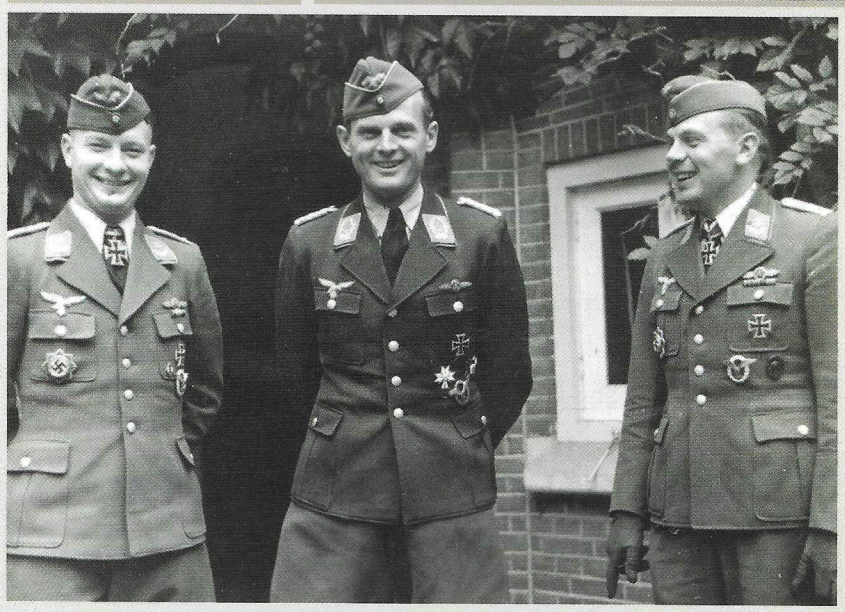


An accident at Cognac in 1942. It is possible that both aircraft came from IV./KG 2 as each carries a letter on the tail which was particular to training units.

Below: Do 217 E-4, F8+CN of 5./KG 40. W.Nr. 4279, F8+CN, was shot down by 409 and 486 Sqns on the night of 23 July 1942, crashing near Spalding. The photograph (bottom right) showing the gunner in the dorsal turret wearing his shatterproof goggles, offers a good sense of scale.

Uffz. Kurt Puhl of 7./KG 2 was lost in action on the night of 30 July 1942 when Do 217 E-4, W.Nr. 5427, U5+IR, flown by Lt. Gustav Dittrich, was shot down into the North Sea.

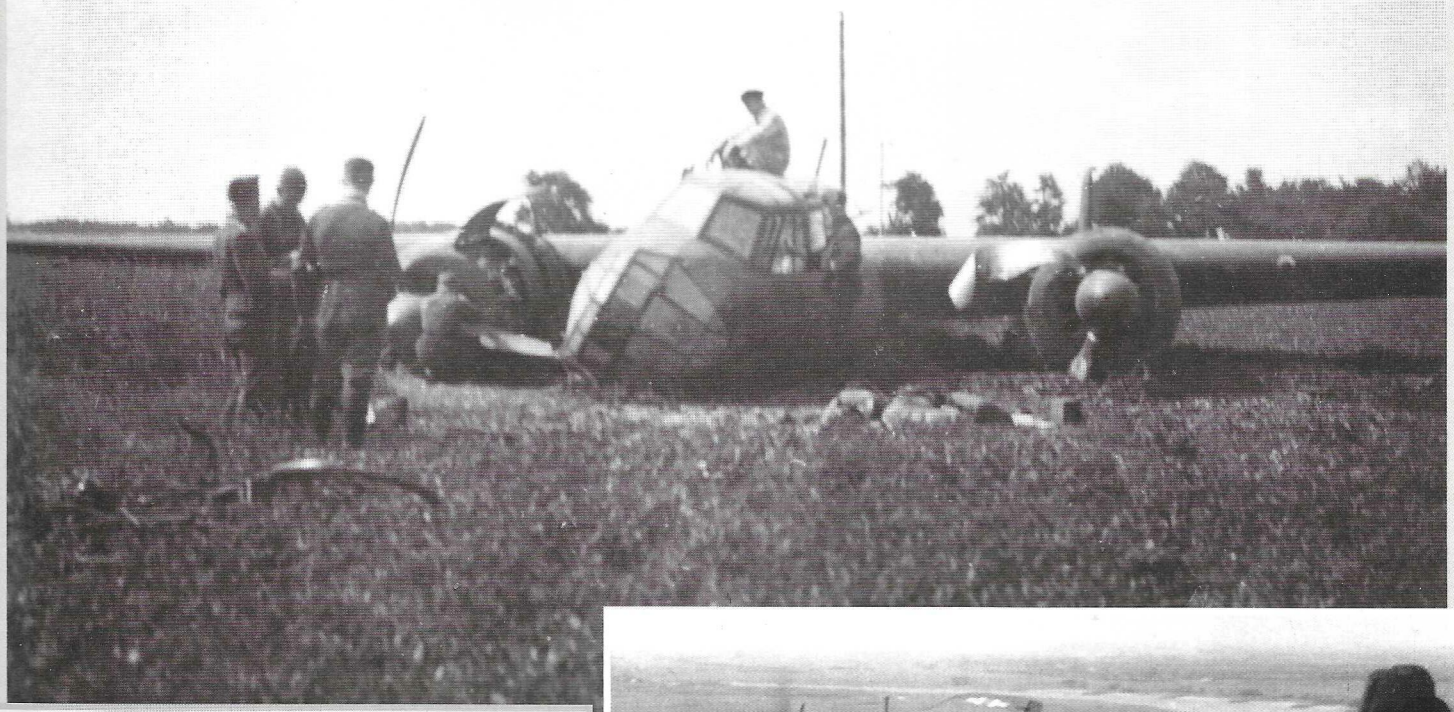
Above: Uffz. Kurt Puhl (right) about to receive the Iron Cross Second Class shortly before his death.

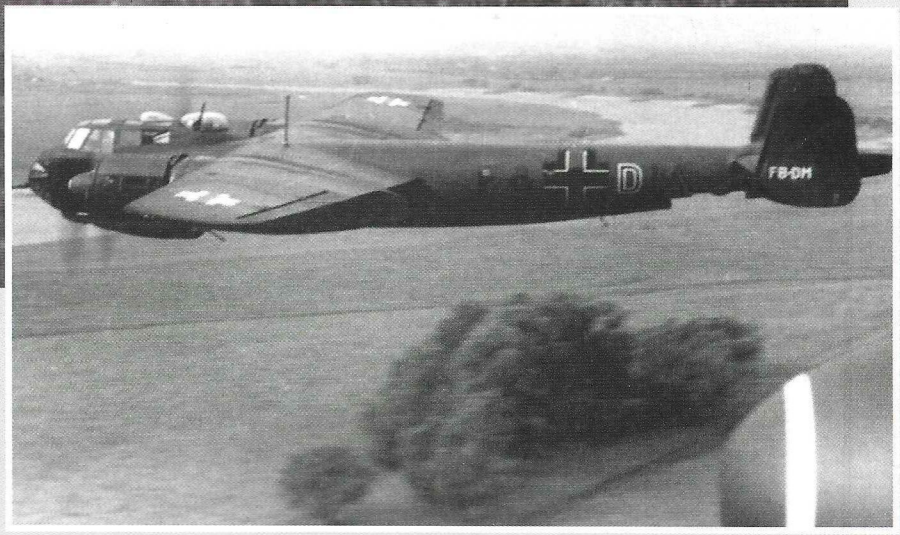


Oblt. Fritz Sengschmidt, Staffelkapitän of 4./KG 40; Maj. Martin Kästner Gruppenkommandeur of II./KG 40; and Oblt. Wilhelm Schmitter of Stab II./KG 40. September 1942. (via Green)

Below: A technical problem meant that this Do 217 E-4, W.Nr. 4313, of the Luftflotte Reserve for Luftflotte 3 force-landed at Beez on 7 August 1942.

This unidentified Do 217 E-4 has suffered more extensive damage in its crash-landing. Note the letter 'C' on the port wing leading edge.



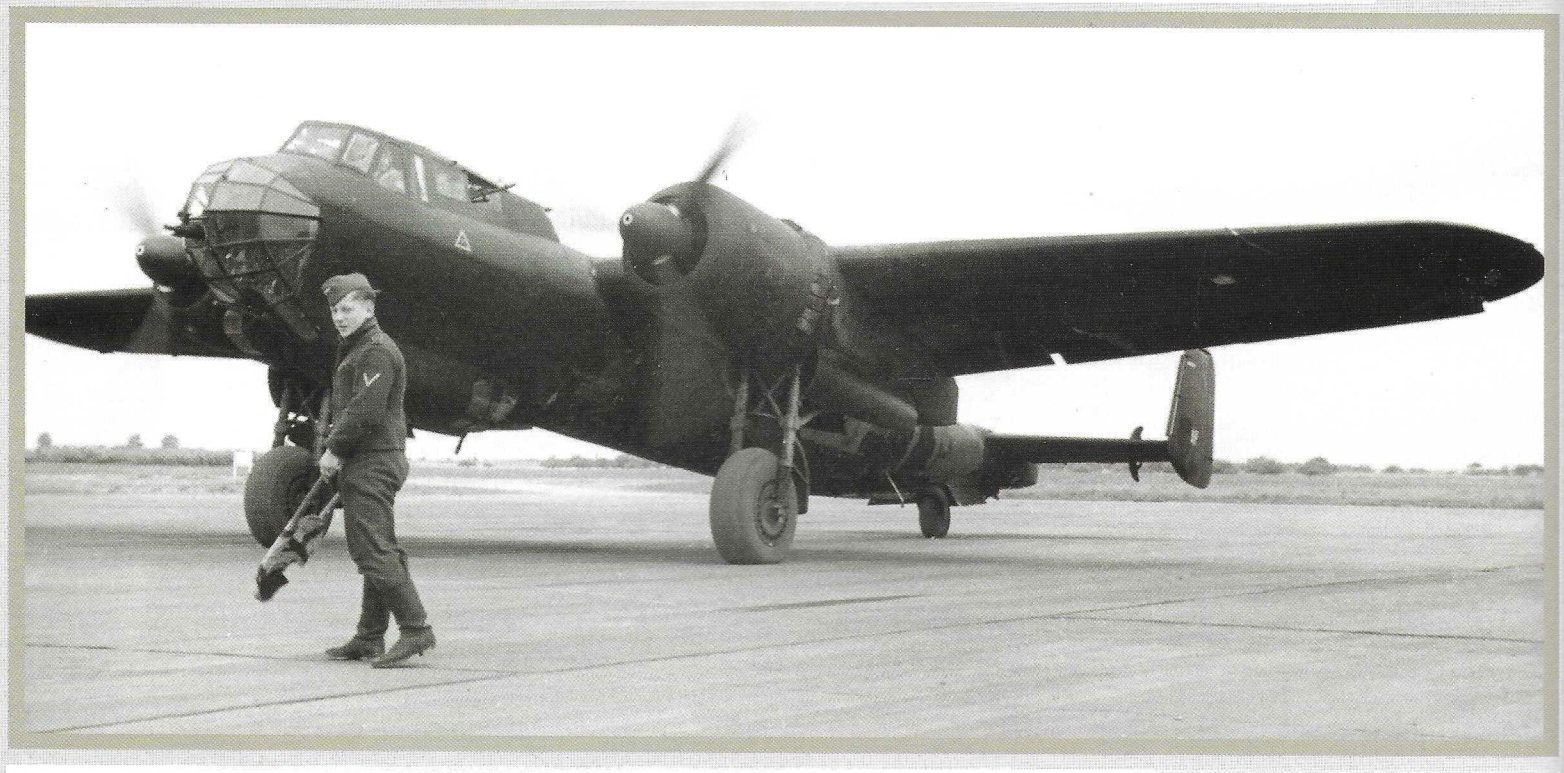


Low pass by Do 217 E-4, F8+DM, of 4./KG 40. Two aircraft with this code were lost in 1942 – W.Nr. 5422 was lost on 10 August 1942 and W.Nr. 5537 on 22 December 1942.

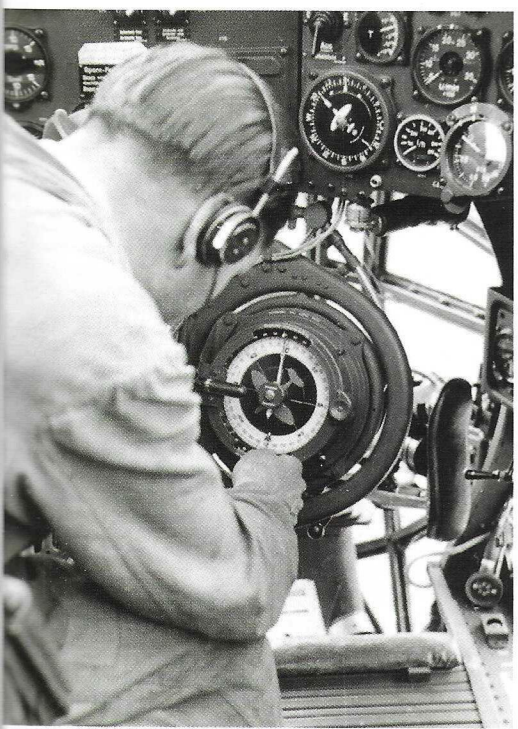
Do 217 E-4, F8+EM, of 4./KG 40 showing combat damage, after its crash-landing in August 1942. Note that the starboard rudder has been shot away.

Almost a casualty over Dieppe on 19 August 1942 was American Fg Off Harold Pederson of 165 Sqn. The damage was caused by a Do 217. He would be killed on 3 February 1943 flying with the 52nd FG.

Do 217 E-4, F8+AP, of 6./KG 40. Four aircraft were recorded as carrying this code: W.Nr. 5368 lost 22 April 1942; W.Nr. 5502 lost 8 September 1942; W.Nr. 5542 lost 2 October 1942; and W.Nr. 4384 lost 18 December 1942. Although on the tail, the W.Nr. cannot be discerned.



Left and above: Luftwaffe mechanics about to remove or replace the propeller of a Dornier bomber, Schipol, May 1942.

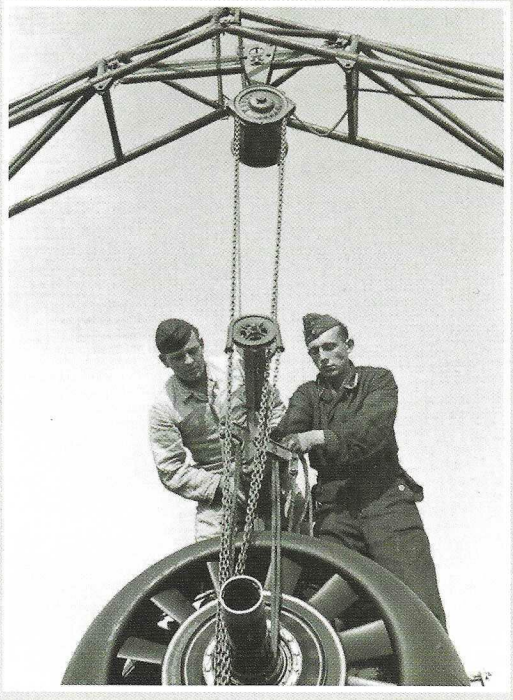


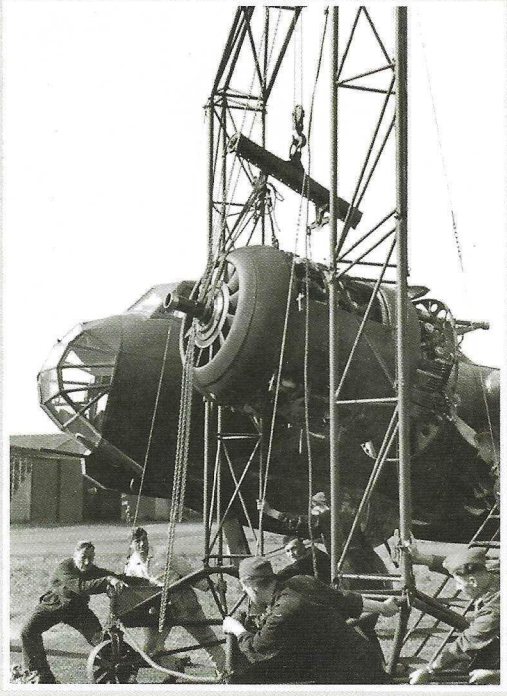
Above: A technician makes adjustments to the master compass on a Dornier Do 217 bomber, Germany, 1942.

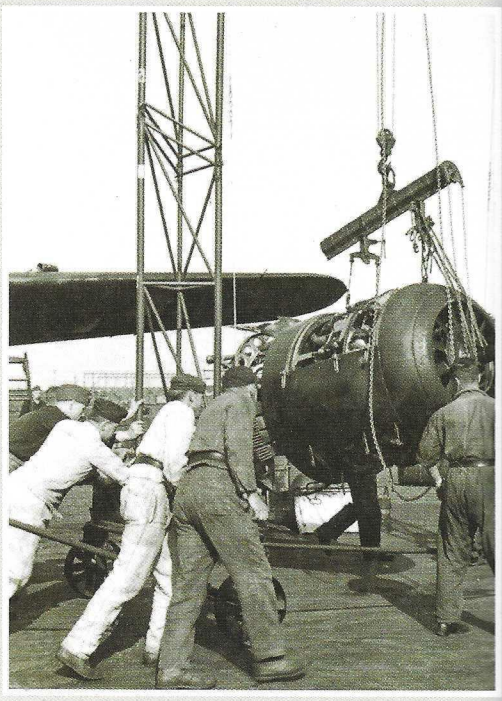
Above middle: Replacing an instrument part in the cockpit of a Dornier Do 217 bomber, Germany, 1942.

Right: Compass adjustment on a Dornier Do 217 bomber, Germany, 1942.

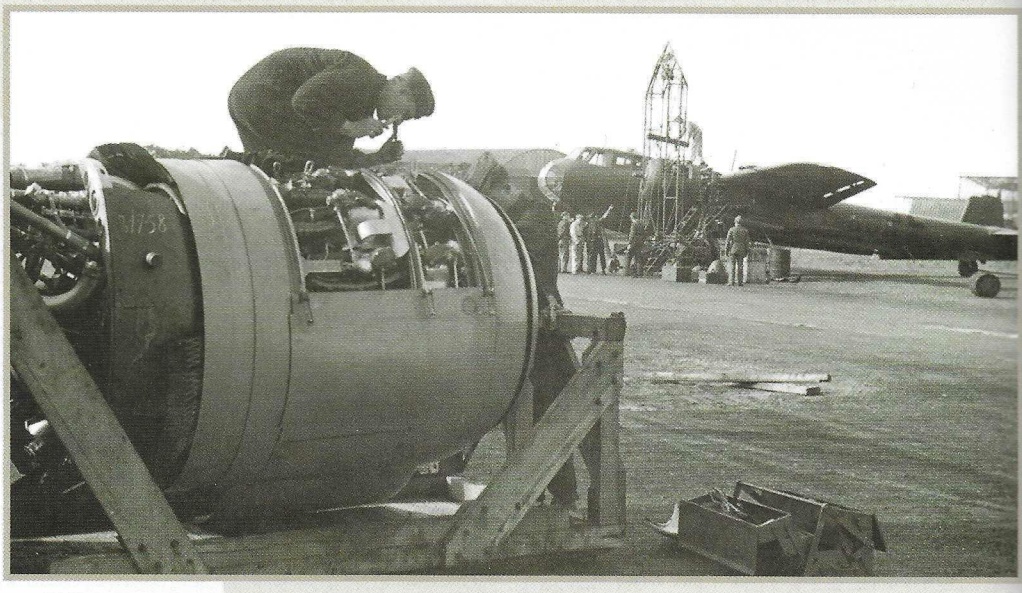
Above: The technician checks electrical fuses to a device in the rear of the cockpit.

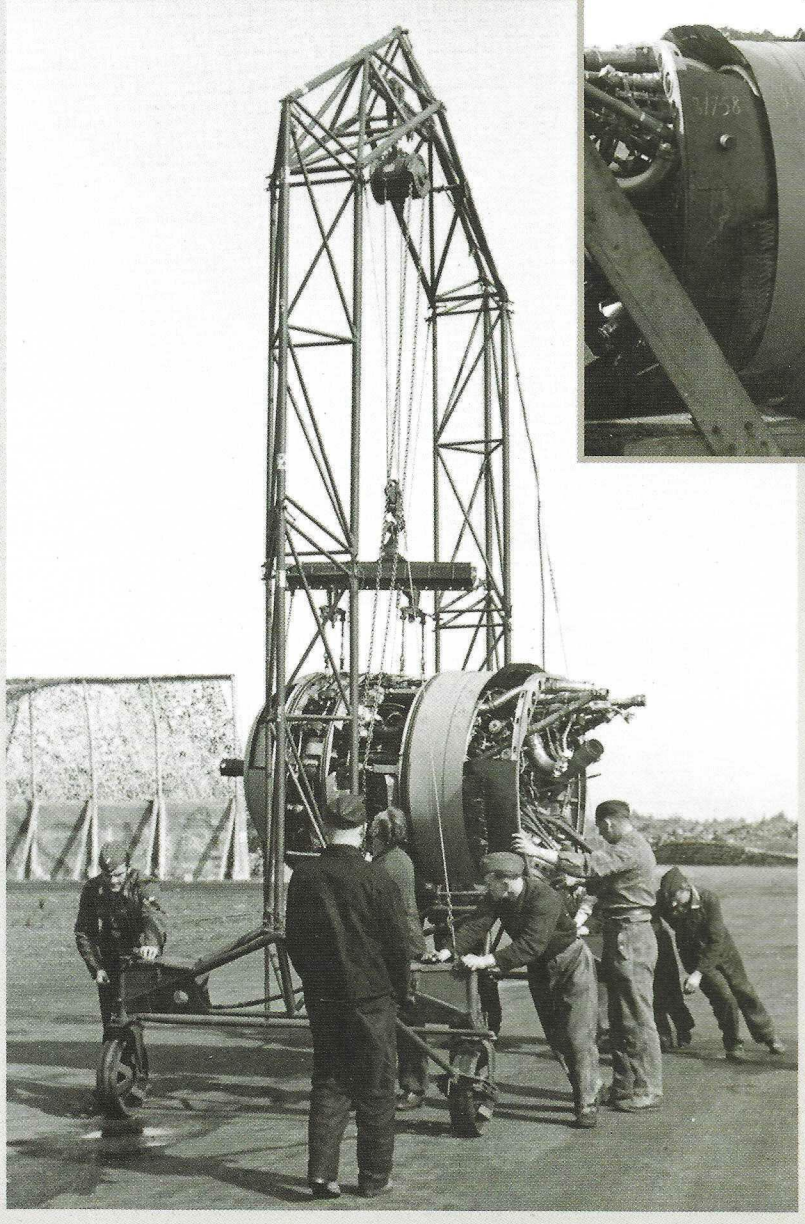






The above three photographs show the port BMW 801 engine being removed and hauled away using a mobile engine crane and chains, The Netherlands, May 1942.





Above: While mechanics work on removing the port engine in the background (as seen in the three photographs at the top of the page), two mechanics are seen preparing a replacement engine in its wooden transport cradle for fitment to the Dornier.

Left: Having removed the replacement BMW engine from its transport cradle, ground crew push the mobile crane and engine to the waiting Dornier, The Netherlands, May 1942.

Right: Ground crew have hoisted the engine into position and are now connecting it up to the engine firewall.

CHAPTER FOUR

NIGHTFIGHTERS AND GLIDE-BOMBS

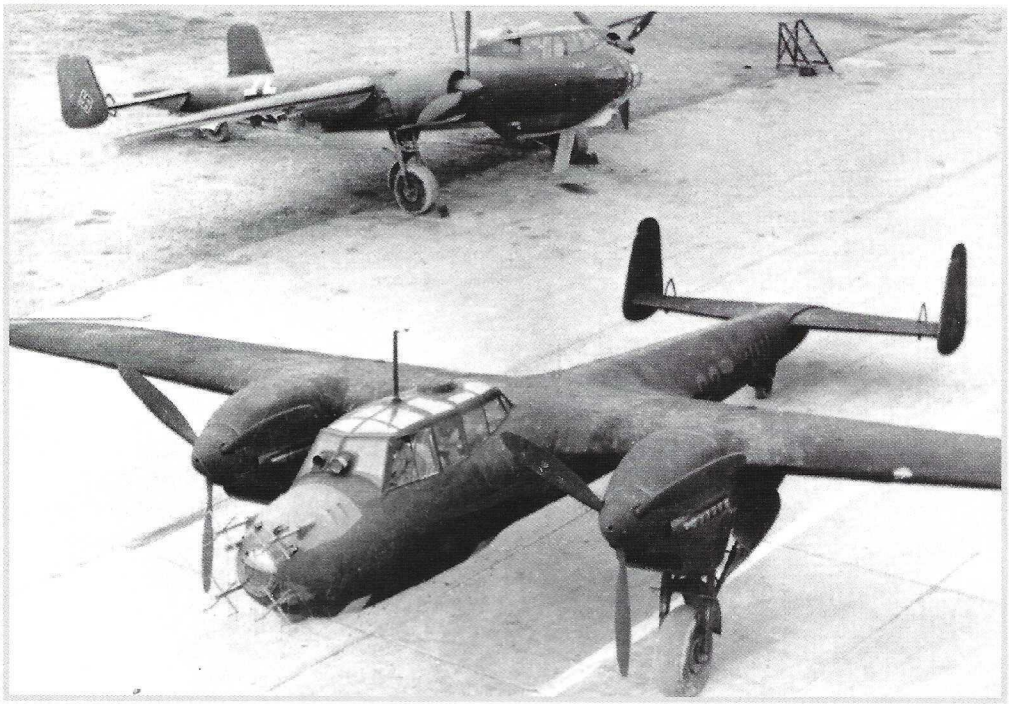
Do 217 N-2, W.Nr. 0174, PE+AW, was converted from a Do 217 E-1. Note that no radar is fitted.

A NUMBER of developments to the tried and tested Do 217 E-4 came to fruition in late 1942 and would influence the design and future use of the aircraft.

In response to the intensifying RAF bomber offensive, additional nightfighters were needed by the Luftwaffe. In the summer of 1940, the need for nightfighters had resulted in two versions of the Do 17 being converted to meet this role to complement the Bf 110 and Ju 88 C. These were the Do 17 Z-7 *Kauz* (Screech Owl) I and the Z-10 *Kauz* II. The glazed nose was removed from a Do 17 Z-3 and replaced by the nose from a Ju 88 C-2/C-4. The armament was three 7.9 mm machine guns and one 20 mm cannon and the aircraft was designated the Do 17 Z-7. This was soon found to be unsatisfactory and an entirely new nose was designed which increased the armament to four machine guns and two cannon. In the tip of the nose was an infrared spotlight called *Spanner Anlage* which was later apparently replaced by first generation FuG 202 *Lichtenstein* radar. This was designated the Do 17 Z-10.

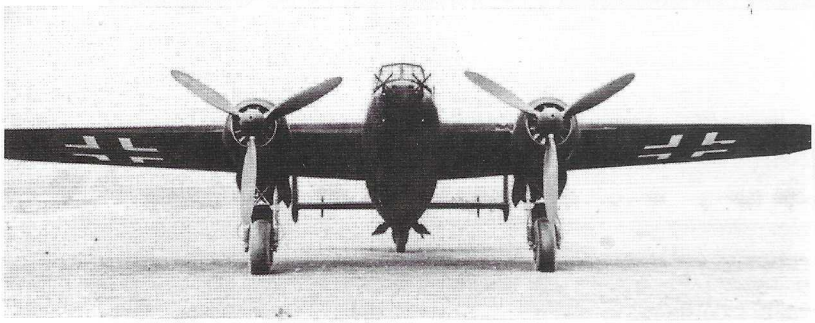
With the Do 17 Z being replaced by the Do 217 E and the Do 17 production ending in October 1940, a Do 217 E-1 was soon used to assess suitability of the type as a nightfighter. In February 1942, a Do 217 E-2 was

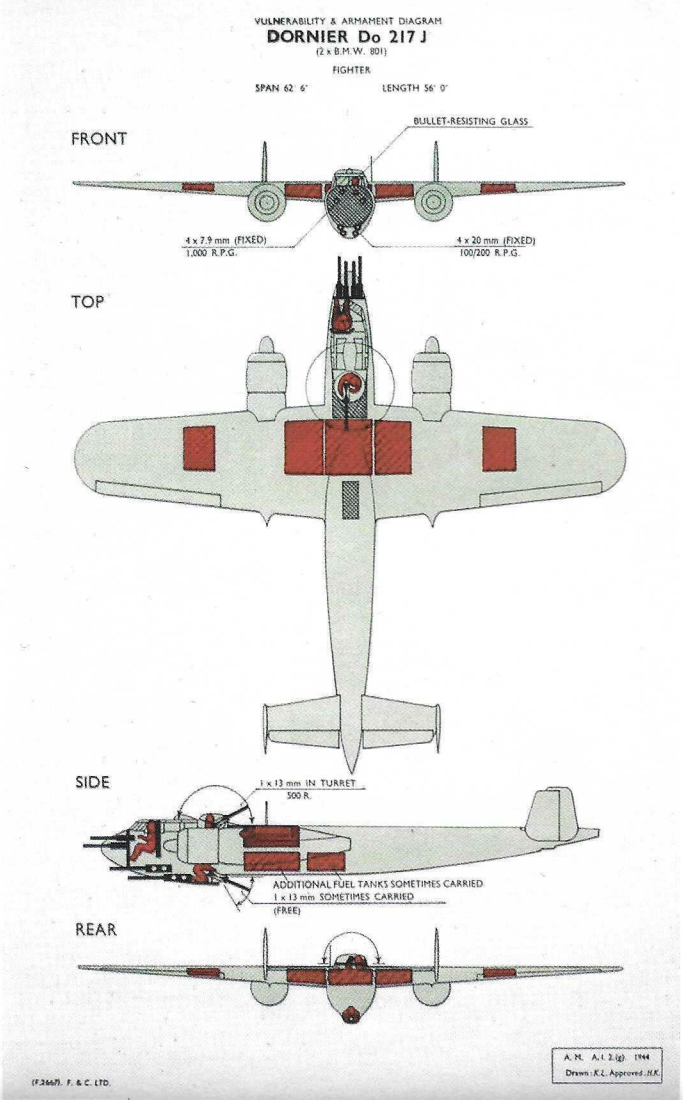
Left and below: Do 17 Z-10, W.Nr. 2867, PF+DH.



Do 215 B-5 nightfighter. In the background is Do 217 E-4 1163 which later flew with 3./KG 2.

Below and below right: Do 217 J-1, W.Nr. 1251. It is possible that its aircrew went to 4./NJG 3 as W.Nr. 1251 was damaged in an accident with this unit on 9 July 1942.





Produced in 1944, the RAF's recognition guide to the Do 217 J, showing armament, both offensive and defensive in black, and fuel tanks and crew positions in red. (via Wadman).

further trialled by fitting it with FuG 202 Lichtenstein BC radar and *Spanner Anlage* and was later designated the Do 217 J-1. It was fitted with four MG 17s and four MG-FF 20 mm cannon in a solid nose; later the four MG-FFs were replaced by four MG 151s. The rear-firing guns, including the MG 131 in the turret, were retained, as was the ability to carry bombs, as the aircraft was intended as a night intruder. However, even before it first flew, in October 1941 such missions over Britain ceased by order of the *Führer* so it was never used in the intruding role as the Do 17 Z-10 and Ju 88 C-2/C-6 had been. The Do 217 J-2 differed in that it was fitted with FuG 212 *Lichtenstein* C-1.

Operational evaluation was carried out in March 1942, a Do 217 J-1 being issued to *Oblt.* Wilhelm Herget's 4./NJG 1. Herget, a long-standing Bf 110 pilot, was not a fan of the new nightfighter and later wrote:

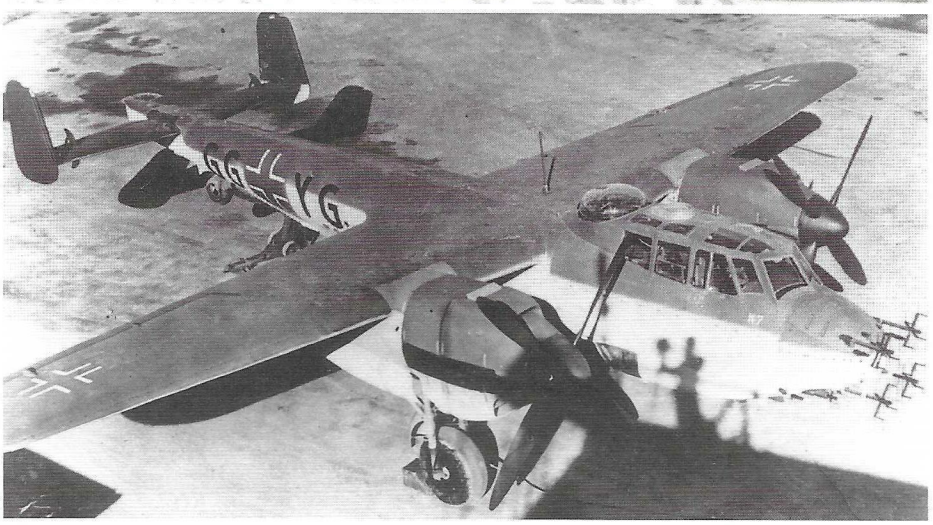
> 'My *Gruppe* had a *Staffel* of Do 217s because Bf 110s were in short supply and High Command thought that the four-and-a-half hour endurance compared to the two-and-a-half of the Bf 110 could be of use. The 217 was fast, stable, excellent for instrument flying and obviously a very nice bomber, but much too heavy on the controls for a fighter. I flew it once just to try it, but after that I refused to use it on operations and stuck to my tried and tested 110 which was greatly superior as a fighter.'

Crews generally found the aircraft difficult to take off and land and that it had too little performance in reserve for a fighter, not helped by its poor manoeuvrability in

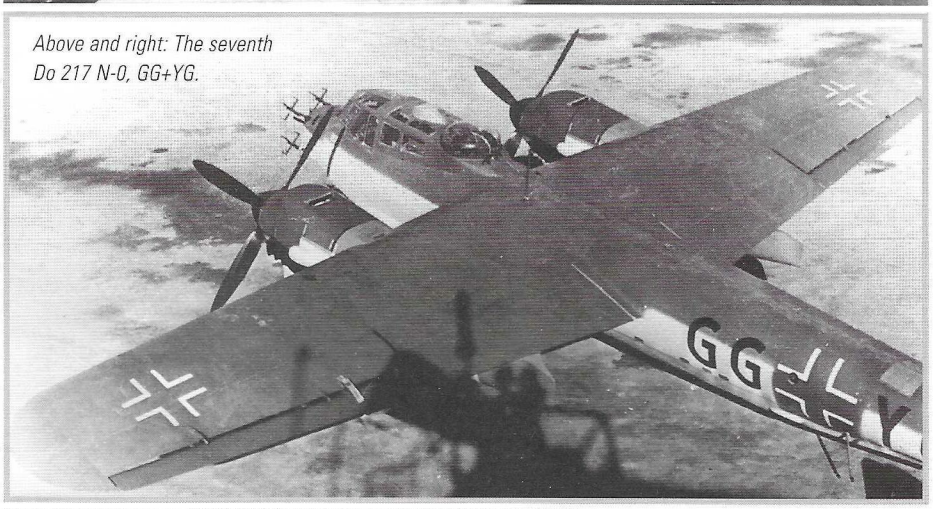
Left: Wilhelm Herget (seen here as a Major).

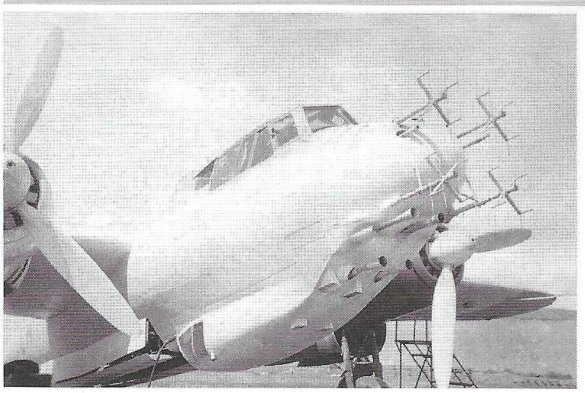
Below: Herget (far right) with Ofw. Hans Liebherr and Ofw. Emil Gröss.

Do 217 N-0, believed to be the 6th aircraft and fitted with FuG 202.



Above and right: The seventh Do 217 N-0, GG+YG.





Left: Reputed to be Schoenert's personal Do 217 J, it clearly shows the radar and gun arrangement in the nose.

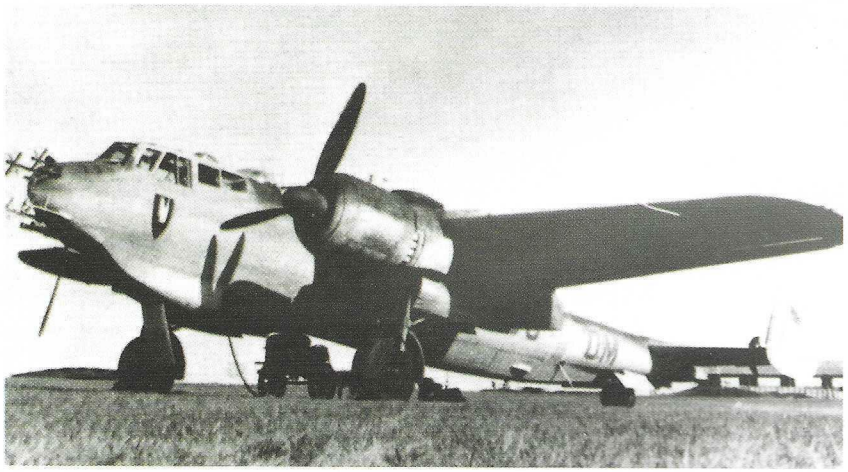
Hptm. Rudolf Schoenert.

combat situations. Furthermore, with both offensive and defensive armament, it was normal to carry 750 kg of ammunition which greatly affected the nightfighter's performance.

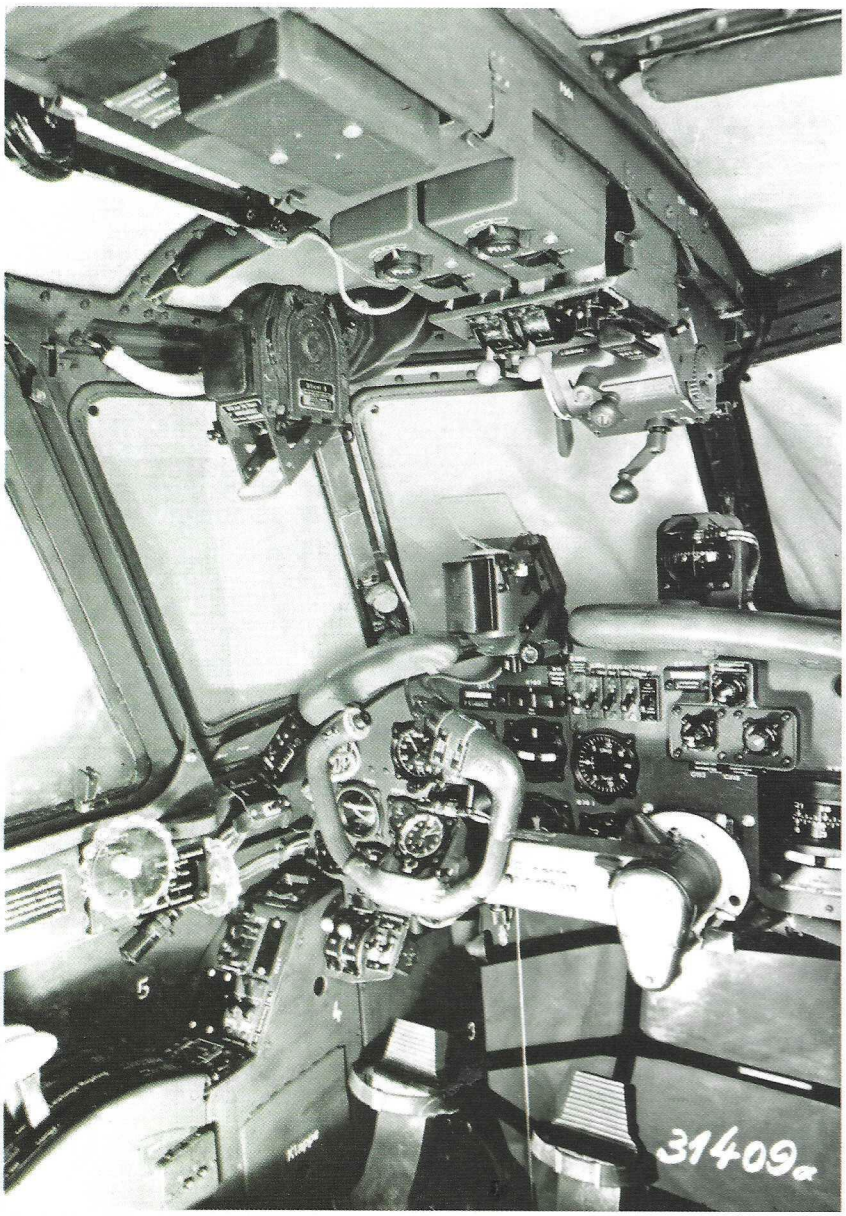
In July 1942, the Do 217 N-1 first flew; this variant was identical to the J-2 but was powered by DB 603 engines. It would later have the turret and rear-facing guns removed to become the N-2 and many were fitted with obliquely-mounted upward MG 151 cannon in the fuselage, the so called *Schräge Musik* modification. This had been championed by *Oblt.* Rudolf Schoenert of 4./NJG 2 in July 1942, the same month he was awarded the *Ritterkreuz* having shot down 21 aircraft by night. Schoenert, who later flew with 2./NJG 3, II./NJG 5 and I./NJG 100, was, surprisingly it would appear, a great supporter of the Do 217 nightfighter and it is believed that 27 of his 65 victories came when he was flying a Do 217. Of those, 25 occurred over the East Front between 16 August and 27 October 1943 with I./NJG 100.

Another successful nightfighter pilot was *Lt.* Johann Krause who joined I./NJG 3 in November 1941. He would begin his conversion to the Do 217 from the Bf 110 with 7./NJG 1 on 19 June 1942, returning to I./NJG 3 to fly his first operational mission on 27 August 1942. His first victory came on 6 October 1942 when he shot down two Wellingtons, the first from 115 Sqn flown by Fg Off Len Smith and the second from 75 Sqn flown by Sgt George Rhodes. However, in May 1943, he was posted to 6./NJG 101, still flying the Do 217, and did not get his next victory until 1 February 1944. In July 1944, he began flying the Ju 88 but by then he had shot down 14 aircraft with the Do 217.

The Do 217 J and Ns appear to have been only delivered piecemeal to various operational and training units. The first Do 217 J-1 to be mentioned in Luftwaffe loss records was on 28 May 1942 when an aircraft from Erg./NJG 2 suffered an accident. The first Do 217 J-2 lost came from 1./NJG 3 on 28 August 1942 and was as a result of enemy action. The first Do 217 N-1 to be mentioned was an aircraft which suffered an accident with II./NJG 4 on 11 March 1943, albeit prototype Do 217 NV1, W.Nr. 1401, had suffered an engine fire on a test flight on 11 October 1942 while with the *Erprobungsstaffel der Luftwaffe Rechlin* and crashed into Lake Müritz. Although *Fw.* Günther Ritter and his crew bailed out, they fell into



Believed to be Do 217 J-1, W.Nr. 1290, D5+OM, of 4./NJG 3. This aircraft crashed into the sea just off Wenningstedt on 9 August 1942, killing Lt. Günther Martens and his two crew.



Do 217 E cockpit of an aircraft fitted with four rearward-firing MG 81 machine guns. Note the inverted Revi gunsight fitted in the cockpit roof.

the lake and drowned. The first Do 217 N-2 to be mentioned suffered an accident with 6./NJG 4 on 21 January 1944.

It is believed that two of the last night air combat victories of 1942 were by Do 217 J-1s of 1./NJG 3. At 2255 hrs on 17 December 1942, *Lt.* Martin Fünfstück shot down a Stirling believed to be from 75 Sqn and flown by Flt Sgt Ken Dunmall which crashed at Aalsmeer with all seven crew taken prisoner. But during the combat his Do 217 J-1 was damaged by return fire and force-landed west of Werle with all three crew injured. Then in what would be the penultimate Luftwaffe nightfighter claim of 1942, Lt. Hans Caspers, believed to be flying a Do 217, shot down a Halifax of 138 Sqn flown by Fg Off Gervase Newport-Tinley DFC at 0103 hrs on 23 December 1942, which crashed near Meppel in Holland.

It would also appear that Do 217 nightfighters had made a fleeting appearance in the Mediterranean from late September to November 1942. On 6 September, X. *Fliegerkorps* had requested four Do 217 nightfighters for convoy escort duties. It would appear that two from 7./NJG 2 arrived at Heraklion in Crete on 24 September 1942, one of which was coded R4+DR, to form *Nachtjagdkommando Oberbefehlshaber Süd* which was apparently subordinate to *Sonderkommando Koch*, a specialist maritime reconnaissance and electronic jamming unit commanded by *Maj.* Adolf Koch. No details of their operations are known, but on 9 October 1942 a Do 217 J-1, W.Nr. 1279, was destroyed by a bomb at Heraklion and it is possible that another aircraft was damaged in an accident at Athens-Eleusis around 27 September 1942.

The *Regia Aeronautica* (Italian Air Force) did express an interest in the Do 217 as a nightfighter and, in August 1942, crews began training on the new aircraft. One crew, captained by *Lt.* Rudolfo Facio, was killed with *Nachtjagdschule* 1 when on 9 January 1943, their Do 217 J-1, W.Nr. 1341, crashed west of the airfield at München-Riem. A total of 12 machines were ordered [six J-1 and six J-2: W.Nr. 1251 (formerly 3C+MT), 1262 (formerly 3C+MR), 1264, 1272, 1288, 1316 (formerly 3C+LT), 1321 (formerly 3C+GR), 1341, 1347, 1348, 1358 (formerly 3C+IL), and 1361] and operated by 235a *Squadriglia* of 60° *Gruppo* 41° *Stormo* commanded by *Capt.* Aramis Ammanato and 233a *Squadriglia* 59° *Gruppo* 41° *Stormo Intercettori* commanded by *Capt.* Giovanni Scagliarini, both based at Lonate Pozzolo. 233a *Squadriglia* did not receive its first two Do 217s until 24 February 1943 where they became part of a mixed aircraft unit. In January 1943, Hungary also expressed an interest in the Do 217 as a nightfighter, but received three Bf 110s instead.

As well as developing nightfighters, by January 1942 the replacement for the Do 217 E, the Do 217 K and M, was going ahead. It was decided that the cockpit would now be totally glazed to give unhindered all-round vision but other than that the Do 217 K-1 was essentially a Do 217 E-2 with a modified step-less cockpit and fitted with a nitrous oxide boost which increased its range and speed. However, shortages of BMW 801A radial engines now resulted in the Do 217 M-1 fitted with the DB 603 A in-line engine. Apart from the engines, it was almost identical to the K variant.

The Do 217 K prototype first flew at Rechlin in early July 1942. The Do 217 M was planned to commence in May 1942 powered by DB 601 A-1 engines but this was changed to DB 603 engines and then flew at Rechlin from September 1942 onwards. The initial losses of these new types suffered by an operational unit were from 1./*Nachtaufklärungsstaffel* on the Eastern Front, the first Do 217 K-1 being lost in an accident on 6 January 1943 and the first Do 217 M-1 in another accident on 4 June 1943. From a bomber perspective, it would appear that the Do 217 K-1s arrived on II./KG 40 in late December/early January 1943 as the first aircraft to suffer an accident was at Soesterberg on 17 January 1943.

There would be one more in this series of developments – using the Do 217 to carry and launch remote-controlled glide-bombs. As early as 1939, Henschel und Sohn began developing such weapons for use against ships. Its first design was the Henschel Hs 293 which began to be produced in January 1942. The Hs 293 or Kehl 3 anti-shipping glide-bomb carried a 300-kg warhead and a small rocket motor accelerated the missile to about 600 km/h which cut out after 12 seconds and the bomb coasted into its target in a shallow glide, again guided by a bomb aimer who was also aided by a small flare in the tail of the bomb.

This was followed by the PC 1400X, known as *Fritz* X, which first commenced testing in May 1942. This was a penetration weapon with a 320-kg warhead intended to be used against armoured targets such as heavy cruisers and battleships. The aircraft to launch such missiles were to be the He 177, the design and production of which was plagued with problems, and the Do 217 E, which was already combat proven. In April 1942, the first Do 217 E-5 – essentially a Do 217 E-4 modified for Hs 293 operations – arrived at Peenemünde in northern Germany for trials on its operational range, with varying stores configurations, in the hope that the first missions would take place over the Atlantic in spring 1943. However, political and military interference, a shortage of missiles, unserviceability of missiles and aircraft, insufficiently trained aircrew and the decision that after 34 Do 217 E-5s were delivered, a further 107 were diverted for conventional bombing operations, meant that spring 1943 was not possible and that the He 177 would now become the main launch platform. However – and yet again – the He 177 programme slipped, so in February 1943 the Do 217 was re-chosen to be the main platform, especially

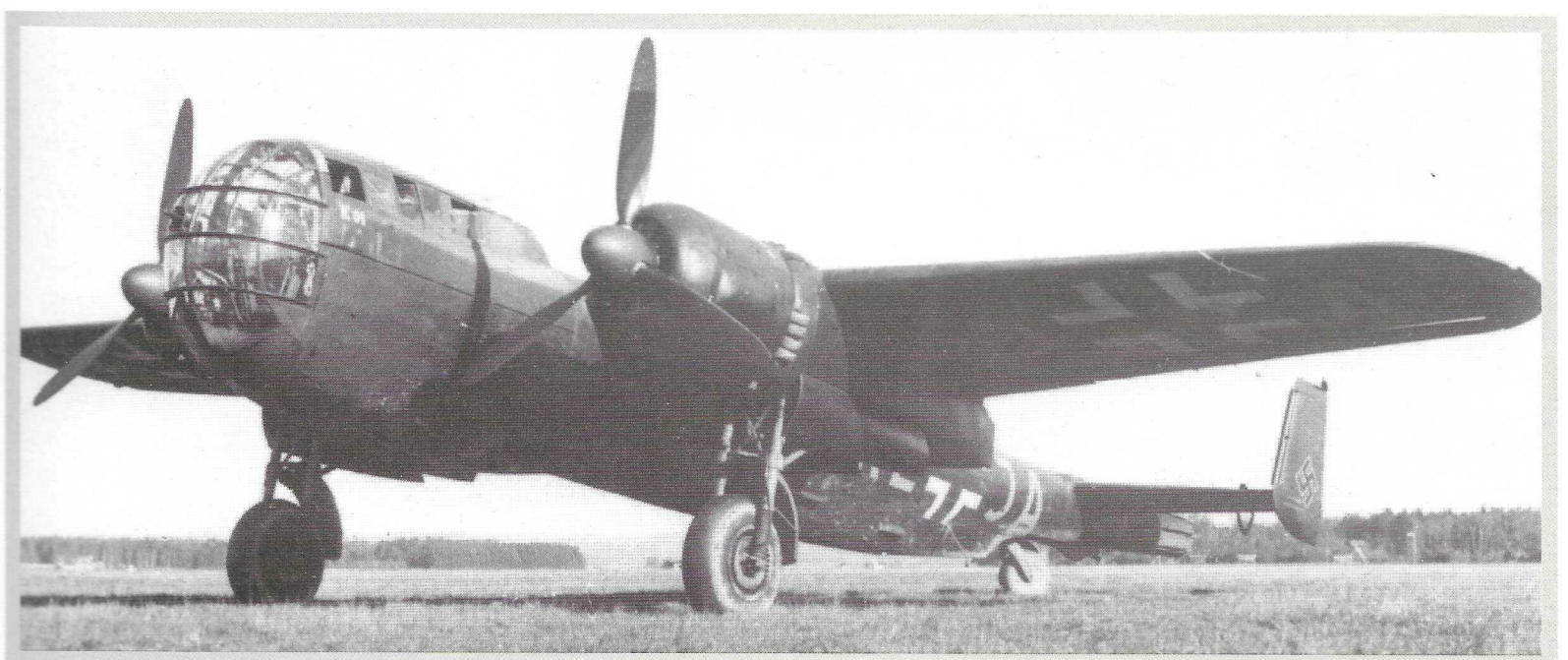
since the Do 217 K-2 – with its enlarged wing area capable of carrying two Hs 293 or *Fritz* X missiles – was ready from December 1942.

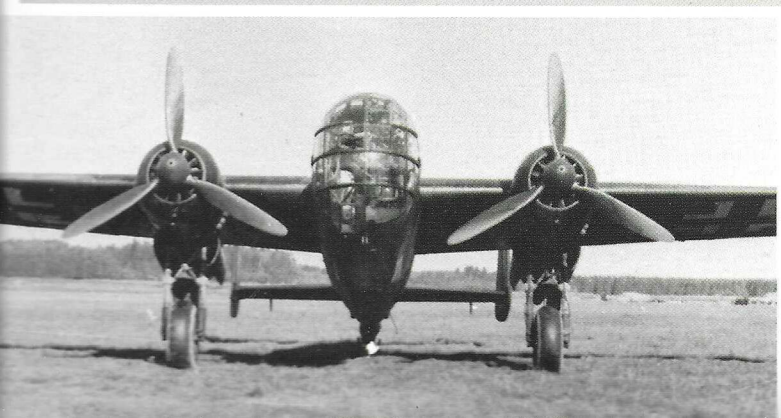
The first unit to train on these weapons was *Hptm.* Franz Hollweck's II./KG 100 at Garz/Usedom, followed by *Hptm.* Ernst Hetzel's III./KG 100 at Schwäbisch-Hall and, later, Giebelstadt. Since November 1941, Hollweck had commanded *Versuchsstaffel* 293 which then became *Lehr-und Erprobungskommando* 15, the unit responsible for operationally trialling the Hs 293. It got its first Do 217s in November 1942, and *Lehr-und Erprobungskommando* 15 was then incorporated into II./KG 100. Hetzel's III./KG 100 had been formed from *Kampfgruppe zur besonderen Verwendung* 21 (subsequently *Lehr-und Erprobungskommando* 21) and its task was to develop the *Fritz* X. Delays with aircraft and missiles persisted and it was not until 5 July 1943 that the first Do 217 E-5s from II./KG 100 moved to Istres in southern France, followed a week later by Do 217 K-2s from III./KG 100, now commanded by the very experienced *Hptm.* Bernhard Jope. It would not be long before the first missions were carried out.

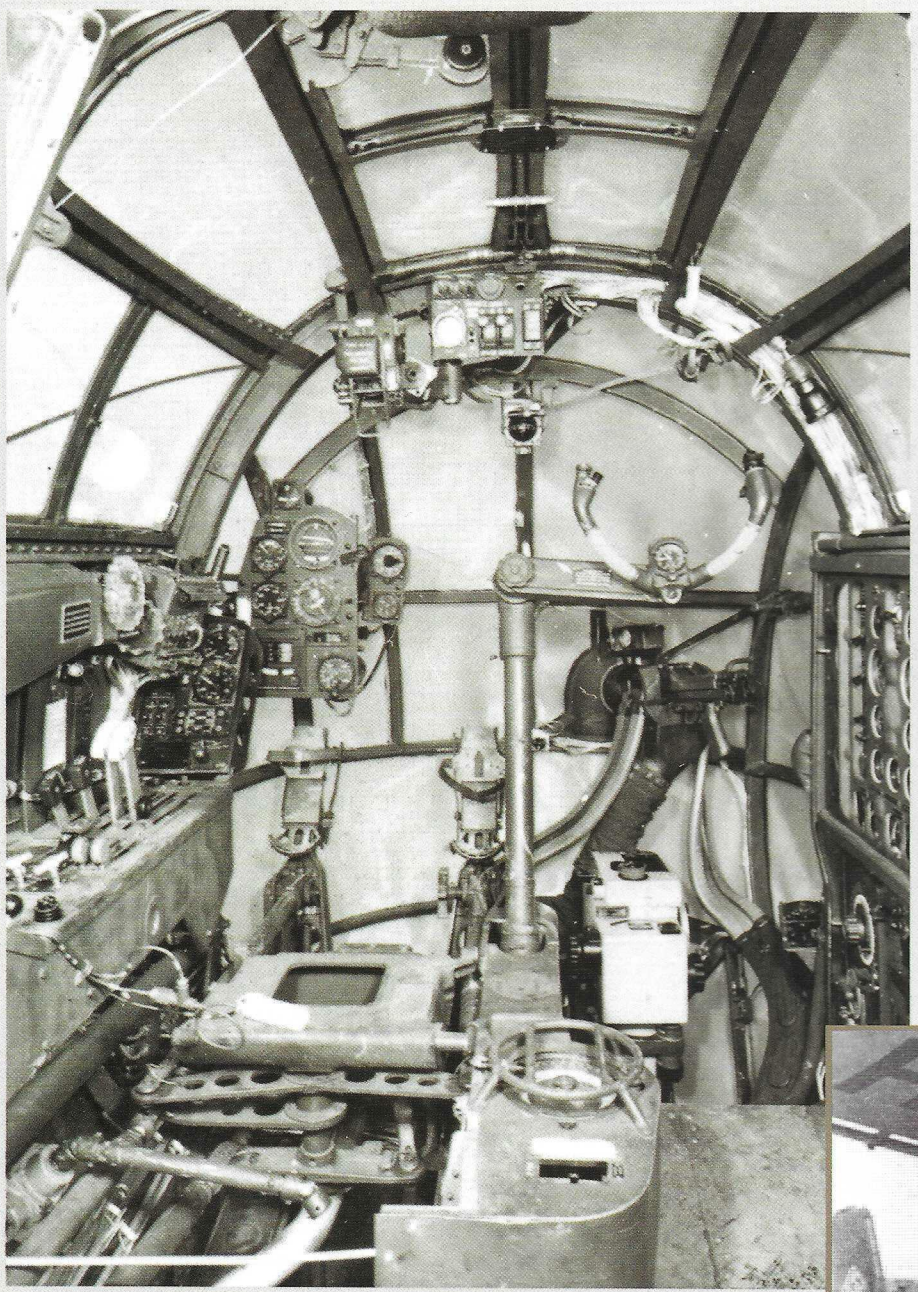
PC 1400X, more commonly known as Fritz X.

Do 217 M-1; note the reinforced central strip to protect against balloon cables.

Do 217 K-01, W.Nr. 4401, KE+JA, was one of an initial batch of 10 pre-production aircraft.

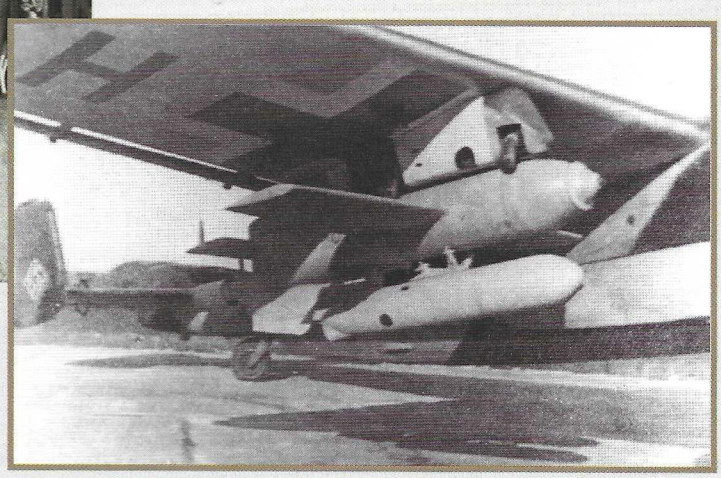




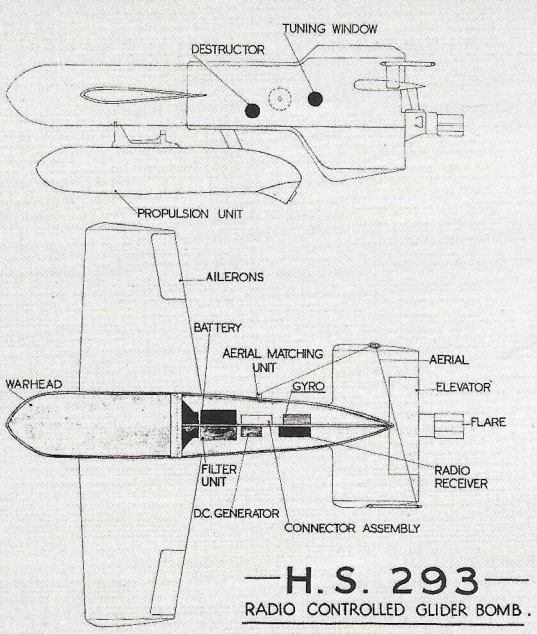


Left: Do 217 M-1 cockpit. This factory photograph is lacking seating to show the cockpit in detail. Note that this particular aircraft was fitted with the four rearward-firing MG 81 machine guns in the tail cone as evidenced by the canopy fitted with an inverted Revi gunsight above the pilot's position to the left. To show the main flying instruments the pilot's control wheel (which incorporates an 8-day clock) has been rotated 180 degrees to starboard, to the bombardier's position – which enabled him to take control if needed.

Do 217 E-5, W.Nr. 5663, KE+GG, later flew with II./KG 100. Note the bulges on the nose for the guidance equipment.



Right: Hs 293 under the wing of a Do 217 E-5 from either Lehr-und Versuchsstaffel 293/ Erprobungskommando 15.



Produced by the British Royal Aircraft Establishment in February 1946, this schematic shows the simplicity and components of the Hs 293.

Do 217 E-5, W.Nr. 5554, 6N+NP of either Lehr-und Versuchsstaffel 293/Erprobungskommando 15. It was reported as being damaged on 13 September 1943 while with I./KG 100.

CHAPTER FIVE

On All Fronts – 1943

Do 217 E-4, U5+ON, the letters ON appearing on the port tail fin. Note the painted-out Swastika and blacked-out crosses for night operations over the UK. The only record of an aircraft with this code was W.Nr. 4228 lost on the night of 29 May 1942.

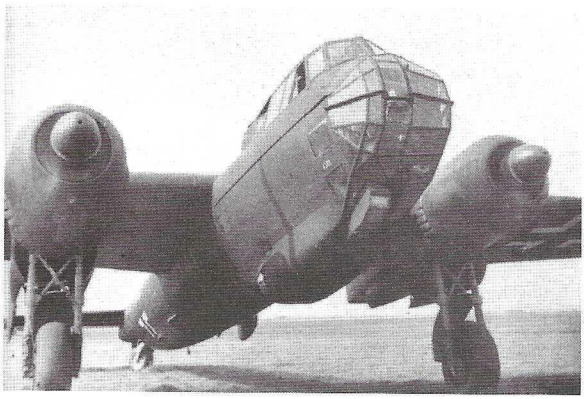
THROUGHOUT 1943 the Do 217 continued its attacks against Britain and, towards the end of the year, against shipping in the Mediterranean using Hs 293 and *Fritz* X air-launched guided weapons. Over mainland Europe, it would continue in small numbers in the nightfighter role and when Do 217 nightfighter units moved east in autumn 1943, it would have better success. Over the Soviet Union it was used in the night reconnaissance roles. However, with the introduction of the Ju 188 and Ju 88 S, the Do 217 as a bomber would start to be replaced from late 1943 onwards. Furthermore, with better nightfighters such as the Ju 88 G and He 219 coming into service, the Do 217 J and N would be phased out. As a result, the Do 217's impact lessened and losses began to reduce, albeit not for some months yet.

This would be the third year of operational flying for *Oblt.* Josef Steudel of 8./KG 2 who wrote, somewhat pessimistically:

> 'The year began in the same way the old year had ended – flying to England again and again in wintery conditions. The *Kampfverbände* were so weakened that our attacks were no longer able to do much damage. Sometimes, more missions were aborted than carried through, in part because of weather, but more often than not because of technical difficulties. Our situation was frightening and depressing. The numbers of nightfighters had also increased enormously and they were very successful. Truly experienced crews were a rarity with us. If someone had survived 10 missions he was already considered an old hand (or *Alter Hase* as we called them). The young crews were shot down one after another. The British long-range fighters were also managing to come alongside our returning aircraft and shoot them down as they made their landing approach. Even by daylight they were operating in our airspace and were often successful. Our unit suffered painful losses in this manner.'

Oblt. Ernst Schneiderbauer.

January 1943 saw a continuation of attacks against harbours and cities on the east coast, minelaying and *Pirateneinsatz*. Operations for 1943 started almost immediately for *Oblt.* Ernst Schneiderbauer and his crew from 3./KG 2. In a deliberate attempt to spoil the New



Do 217 E-4, W.Nr. 4381, F8+BM of 4./KG 40 hit the ground at Fairlight, East Sussex on 4 January 1943, killing Fw. Hartmut Eucker and his crew.

Year celebrations for the local population, three Do 217s took off for England between 1233 and 1303 hrs. One aircraft turned back because of the weather but Ernst reported dropping two 500-kg bombs and eight 50-kg bombs from low level in very bad weather on the centre of Norwich at 1338 hrs. British sources acknowledge that a lone Do 217 attacked that afternoon, crossing the coast at Happisburgh and then, following a circuitous route, it dropped nine 50-kg bombs, damaging St Barnabas Church and Mission Hall in Russell Street along with a number of houses before heading out over Hellesdon and the Salthouse-Neatishead area, machine-gunning as it went. The second aircraft attacked Southwold in Suffolk six minutes later, dropping the same bomb load and machine-gunning as it departed.

The first recorded major attack was against Hull on the night of 3 January 1943 which saw just the one loss from 9./KG 2 – the capture of *Uffz.* Anton Ries and his crew, whose interrogation gave the RAF insight into what life was like in KG 2 for the last four months of 1942. They had just returned to Deelen after four weeks leave and on the night of 3 January 1943 were flying their eighth operational flight. Twelve aircraft from III./KG 2, of which half came from 9.*Staffel*, were briefed to attack Hull. They would be escorted by two Ju 88 nightfighters which would add to the raid by each dropping two 50-kg bombs and incendiaries. However, on taxying out, the Do 217 crew came off the taxiway and as a result were the last to take off. Carrying four SC 500 bombs, they flew at low level, climbing to 7,000 ft as the east coast convoy lanes were reached, but over Grimsby they were coned by searchlights and then hit in the port engine by Flak. The bombs were jettisoned and they turned for home only to discover that the controls were damaged and they were encountering icing. Rapidly losing height, they turned back for the English coast and crash-landed successfully near Spurn Head with no injuries to the crew, which allowed them to set fire to their bomber.

It is possible that *Oblt.* Josef Steudel took part in this mission and he wrote what it was like to carry out an attack on Hull:

> 'Approach over the North Sea. I held a steady course because I felt I was keeping a safe enough distance from the coast. Approach in a westerly direction, in other words over water. There were big fires around the target area the glow from which made us an ideal target for a fighter approaching from behind. Moments before we were about to release the bombs, the *Bordfunker* shouted "*Nachtjäger!*' I reacted with lightning speed. Electrified, I tipped the aircraft into a sharp 180 turn and steep dive. The fighter did not follow and the *Bordfunker* gave the all-clear. The altimeter was approaching zero and it took me all of my strength to pull out of the dive. We were still carrying our bombs with the bomb doors open. The G forces were enormous but the aircraft withstood them. Once out over the water I climbed back to attack altitude and made a second approach. This time we were not molested and the bombs fell onto the target.'

Plt Off Ron Densham and Plt Off Henry Ellis of 29 Sqn. Both would be killed over Normandy on 7 June 1944 still with 29 Sqn and they now lie in the Bayeux War Cemetery. (via Densham)

Two minelaying operations were carried out on 4 January, the main one involving 23 aircraft dropping mines in the Thames and three inexperienced crews dropping mines off Dungeness; in total 26 mines were dropped. For *Uffz.* Heinz Holzmann and his crew of 4./KG 40, this was their first mission and they recorded successfully dropping their mine off Dungeness. However, for the crew of *Fw.* Hartmut Eucker, also from 4./KG 40, this was their first and last mission. After taking off from Soesterberg, they crossed the Channel at 6,000 ft headed south-west, dropping to 1,000 ft in preparation for releasing their single *Luftmine*. However, they skimmed the top of a cliff only to then crash into an empty bungalow at Fairlight in East Sussex. Their Do 217 E-4 disintegrated, killing all four crew instantly. The wreckage caught fire but luckily the mine did not explode. One of the experienced crews mining the Thames Estuary had more luck, as *Oblt.* Karl von Manowarda of 3./KG 2 reported:

> 'We had to fly to Margate at 300 m course 270-280°, 280 km/h, then open the bomb bay doors and drop the mines. They hung on parachutes. We pilots feared the fuses as so many different fuses were in use. We were happy when we got rid of these beasts. I had just headed for home when our Do 217 was hit. I could not dive as I was at 300 m height but went high and to port into the pitch-dark night. I had no compass so kept the constellation of Orion upper left in the canopy window which showed me to the mouth of the River Schelde, where we were ordered to enter Holland. I located this precisely as, with casualties on board, it was important to find our home base. We found it at once and despite being late and with no radio, landed safely.'

With his radio operator, *Fw.* Ernst Fröhlich, slightly wounded, he flew back to Gilze-Rijen where he was commended for completing his mission and bringing back his damaged aircraft.

His attacker was a Beaufighter. Plt Off Ron Densham had joined 29 Sqn as a Flt Sgt in December 1941. He was commissioned in April 1942 but success as a nightfighter pilot had eluded him until 4 January 1943 when he and his navigator/radar operator, Plt Off Henry Ellis, intercepted Mano's Do 217:

> 'At about 2046 hrs, a contact was obtained level and to starboard about 25 miles north-east of Foreness and controller was informed. The chase continued for 15 minutes on a general north-easterly. The bandit was jinking 30° each side of course at irregular intervals and losing height slowly and steadily to 400 ft. Beau closed in at 30 mph and 270 ASI to 600 ft range and a Do 217 was identified by exhausts at 400 ft altitude ahead and level. Beau gave a two second burst with all guns at about 150 yds range from dead astern, seeing strikes on port nacelle and port side of fuselage. Inaccurate orange tracer returned from dorsal turret. The port engine of the e/a caught fire and e/a turned rate three climbing into six-tenths cloud layer from 700 to 1,200 ft. Beau followed but visual and contact was lost in cloud with minimum range.'

Mano would fly just two more missions with 3./KG 2 (an air-sea rescue search on 11 January and an attack on

Sunderland on 13 January) before moving to 11./KG 2 to be an instructor. He would return to operations in October 1943 flying Ju 188s and commanding 1./KG 6 and would be shot down over Hampshire on 15 May 1944 and taken prisoner, a victim of a Mosquito of 264 Sqn which, due to Mano's aggressive evasive action, also crashed.

The remainder of January 1943 would see the Holzmann crew from 4./KG 40 carrying out another seven minelaying missions and a single attack on Dover – no further aircraft were lost by II./KG 40 that month. However, KG 2 would lose two aircraft to nightfighters while attacking Lincoln on the night of 15 January 1943. Two nights later saw a major change in targets when, for the first time since May 1941 and in response to a major attack on Berlin the night before, 118 aircraft attacked London in two waves, the main targets being in the Millwall and Woolwich areas and the only serious incident being a power station badly damaged. Nightfighters claimed six aircraft destroyed and three damaged. The sole claimant for a Do 217 was Wg Cdr Mike Wight-Boycott of 29 Sqn who shot down *Uffz.* Joachim Schnabel's bomber from 7./KG 2 which crashed at Westerham in Kent with the deaths of all four crew.

There would be one more loss in January 1943 when during a second attack on London on the night of 20 January 1943, this time by just 17 aircraft, a nightfighter flown by either Wg Cdr Bob Braham of 141 Sqn or Flt Lt Ken Davison of the Fighter Interception Unit shot down *Fw.* Leopold Heiden's Do 217 E-4 of 4./KG 2 south of Dungeness. German records acknowledge the one loss and that four other aircraft were intercepted by nightfighters with no damage being inflicted.

There was an intriguing combat on 23 January 1943 in which a Do 217 came off better. Two Spitfires of 167 Sqn flown by Fg Off Kees van Eendenburgh and Sgt George Cassidy were scrambled from RAF Ludham just before noon to investigate an unidentified aircraft, which turned out to be a Do 217 flying east at 3,000 ft 40 miles north-east of Happisburgh. The Dutch pilot attacked first, firing from 350 yds closing to 150 yds. He reported seeing many strikes around the cockpit and the port engine which emitted light white smoke. However, the Do 217 pilot pulled up sharply, giving his dorsal gunner a perfect target and he hit the Spitfire – van Eendenburgh by now having run out of ammunition. Van Eendenburgh then broke away and the Do 217 entered cloud, but not before George Cassidy opened fire and reported hits on the bomber's port wing. The two pilots claimed a Do 217 probably destroyed but no Do 217s were lost that day, let alone returned damaged. Both Spitfires landed just about safely.

The start of February 1943 saw the loss of a *Ritterkreuzträger* when *Ofw.* Karl Müller from 3./KG 2 was shot down by Flt Lt John Willson and Fg Off Douglas Bunch of 219 Sqn while attacking Sunderland on 3 February. Müller had flown Do 17s with 1./KG 2 from the start of the war, converting to the Do 217 in November 1941, after which he remained as an instructor until the following April. He would then return to instructing after the Dieppe Raid on 19 August 1942, returning to 3./KG 2 in January 1943 after an apparent disagreement of opinion with his *Kommandeur, Hptm.* Helmut Powolny. Müller had received the *Deutsches Kreuz in Gold* in June 1942 and then the *Ritterkreuz* in October 1942 after having flown 280 missions. It was clear that Müller was an accomplished pilot who tried every trick in the book to avoid being shot down, but this did not prevent the Beaufighter crew from intercepting Müller's Do 217, U5+GL, W.Nr. 5462, just off the Yorkshire coast:

> 'E/a took violent evasive action which consisted of dives and turns and complete orbits, variation of speed between 170 and 240 mph. The chase lasted about five minutes. Pilot was able to close in and reduce range to 450-500 ft and to identify the target as a Dornier by the two fins and high mainplane. The target let go a flare which must have illuminated our fighter. Our pilot closed in from slightly below and astern and opened fire from amidships and below firing orange coloured tracer but no hits were obtained. Our pilot did not see any of his shots hitting so he continued firing giving about a three to four second burst and suddenly there was an explosion and the target blew up and dived in flames and was seen to crash on land in the Filey area. Scene of crash Muston.'

No bodies were ever found in the wreckage and although witnesses on the ground saw two parachutes come down in the sea, all four crew are still recorded as missing.

In between 9 and 12 February 1943, both Do 217 *Geschwader* flew a series of *Störangriffe* from as far north as the Wash and as far west as Dartmouth, II./KG 40 having moved to Evreux at the start of the month. The Holzmann crew from 4./KG 40 then carried out their first *Störangriff* against Woking on 9 February 1943, one of two waves of attacks that morning with Maidstone, Horsham, Tonbridge, Gillingham, Eastbourne, Hastings, Beccles, Lowestoft and Halesworth being attacked. At Southwold in Suffolk a lone Do 217 dropped a single 500-kg bomb and at least seven *Sprengbrand* C.50 'Firepot' (incendiary) bombs. The 500-kg bomb caused a 46 ft crater, but the Firepots extensively damaged two houses, set fire to a boarded shop and set alight the rafters of another house. In total seven civilians were injured and 19 houses damaged. Meanwhile, at Winchester, schoolboy Doug Clews witnessed another attack:

> 'On the morning of Tuesday, 9 February 1943, I had cycled to school as usual and arrived early. I was standing with a group of other boys outside a line of classrooms when the air raid siren was sounded. Almost at the same time a Do 217 appeared roughly level with us and seemingly following the railway line in the dip from the direction of Southampton. When almost directly abeam our position it dropped its bombs (17 of them according to my notes written at the time). It then turned 90 degrees left to head straight for our school at the same time climbing to get over the rising ground. Foolishly none of us took cover and the plane passed almost directly over the top of us at something less than 100 feet whereby we could see the bomb aimer/gunner with great clarity in the transparent domed nose. We waved to him and I can see him in my mind's eye to this day waving back!'

At least five civilians were killed at Winchester in this attack.

The attack on Hastings by a crew from 9./KG 2 had a surprising conclusion. Fg Off Ron Batten of 91 Sqn had been scrambled to intercept the Do 217 and remembered the weather as being dull, completely overcast with cloud base varying between 800 ft and 1,200 ft. He was directed towards the French coast and was about to turn for home when the Dornier appeared directly ahead of him, 3-400 ft above and about a mile away:

Ofw. Karl Müller of 3./KG 3 who was reported missing attacking Sunderland, 3 February 1943. He had been awarded the Knight's Cross on 15 October 1942 after 280 operational missions over Poland, the West and Russia. (via Oliver)

Fg Off Douglas Bunch (seen here as a Sergeant) was the navigator/radar operator to Flt Lt John Willson, who shot down Müller's Do 217 E-4, W.Nr. 5462, U5+GL.

'It didn't take me long to catch him up. I opened fire at about 25 ft, a short burst on the port engine, then a much longer one moving across the inner wing to the fuselage. Several cannon strikes on the engine and wing could be seen as red flashes, then I had to break off with a sharp turn to starboard to avoid running into him.'

Batten lost the Do 217 in cloud and carried out an orbit, then noticed a line of three parachutes; one of the crew, flight engineer *Gefr.* Horst Burkard, stated later that they bailed out at 200 m. Burkard was wounded, two of his comrades were uninjured, but the radio operator was killed. Meanwhile, Ron had been told to head for home, but as he crossed the French coast at 700 ft, his aircraft's engine began to falter and run very roughly. He knew he would not get back and so closed the throttle, turned to starboard, stuck the nose down and leant forward to switch off the fuel supply. However, he was not able to re-lock his harness so when he hit the ground near Hardelot, he struck his head on the gunsight and only came to when, with his Spitfire now on fire, he was pulled out of his cockpit by the crew of a gun battery, one of whom put him over his shoulder and took him to their nearby headquarters. Ron spent the rest of the war in captivity while Horst Burkard did not return to operations until the end of April 1943.

The following afternoon, 29 aircraft took off to carry out a series of *Störangriff*, as reported by the British:

'During the afternoon a series of attacks was made at widely separated points extending from coastal towns in the south-west to the south and to points in the Home Counties where one Key Point installation at Reading was destroyed by a direct hit. The Southern Railway System sustained damage by HEs at five points in the south but the delay to traffic was not serious.'

Fifteen aircraft reported attacks from as far west as Dartmouth, as far east as Rye and up to Reading and Newbury. At Reading, the four SC 500 bombs fell in a line from the north bank of the River Kennet to just outside Reading Town Hall. The first landed on Simmonds Brewery, the second went through the town's Labour Party offices in Minster Street before exploding in the Welsteeds department store opposite. The third bomb landed on the arcade linking Broad Street to Friar Street, exploding outside the popular café called 'People's Pantry', while the final bomb landed on the café and then exploded outside the Town Hall. The pilot responsible for this attack, which cost the lives of 41 civilians, was *Uffz.* Heinz Holzmann of 4./KG 40. He and his crew had taken off from Evreux at 1542 hrs and reported dropping four SC 500 and four SC 50 bombs on Reading before landing without incident back at Evreux at 1727 hrs. Luftwaffe records state that he attacked Reading at 1633 hrs. Thirteen minutes later, another Do 217 broke cloud south-west of Newbury and made one pass at low level, during which it dropped five bombs on a line roughly south to north before turning south and re-entering cloud. The bombs destroyed a church, a row of almshouses and a school, and damaged a public house. Sadly, 15 civilians were killed.

An hour later it was Hailsham's turn, as historian Andy Saunders relates:

'My aunt, Mary Saunders, was a GPO telephonist in the telephone exchange above the Post Office in North Street, Hailsham, when the attack happened during the late afternoon of 10 February 1943. One bomb fell behind Clifton House in Western Road while the other went through the roof of the garage at the rear of the Post Office, shed its fins and then bounced across the town for more than 300 yards before exploding in the Parish churchyard. It blew out most of the stained glass windows in the church and wrecked an adjacent Fire Station in Vicarage Lane which had only just been erected. Two or three firemen were injured, but none fatally. Also injured by flying glass was my uncle, Dick Saunders. My mother, Eileen Saunders, was standing at the kitchen sink in Windsor Road and watched as the Do 217 flew low past the house – she being transfixed by the sight of the German airmen clearly visible in the cockpit and worried by the explosions from the town where she knew family members were at that time. Mary Saunders received a commendation and an award for valuable conduct for staying at her post during the attack. For many years afterwards, the bomb fins were displayed in the Post Office.'

In addition to civilian deaths at Reading and Newbury, at least 15 were killed when four bombs landed on the centre of Chichester, three at Midhurst, three at Rye and one each at Hastings, Bexhill, Cuckfield and Reigate. However, two aircraft from II./KG 40 returned, one of them from attacking Winchester [it is now thought that this aircraft had been damaged the day before], with wounded crew while two fell victim to Flak. *Oblt.* Hans Kleemann of 5./KG 40 was briefed to attack RAF Tangmere and was seen approaching the airfield at 200 ft. Flak immediately engaged the aircraft which shot off its dorsal turret, after which Kleemann attempted a crash-landing at Lagness only to hit a wall and trees. The bomber disintegrated. It has been suggested that this was the aircraft that had attacked Newbury as an eyewitness remembers seeing a red letter 'A' after the fuselage cross which would accord with this aircraft's code F8+AP. However, in the wreckage, four 500-kg and four 50-kg bombs were found, indicating that Hans Kleemann had not yet dropped any ordnance. Another Do 217 flown by *Ofw.* Otto Schneider of 5./KG 40 was seen approaching the coast at 500 ft and was hit by Flak which struck the port wing, after which a fuel tank exploded and the aircraft hit the ground at Saltdean causing its bomb load to explode. All the crew-members were killed in these crashes.

The days that followed saw the Do 217s from both *Geschwader* operating from airfields in Normandy, attacking firstly Plymouth on the night of 13 February 1943 (without any losses), but the attack on Swansea three nights later saw two aircraft of II./KG 2 lost to 125 Sqn. *Uffz.* Günther Hubenthal of 4./KG 2 came down in the sea off Swansea as the body of his *Beobachter* was discovered over two months later near Worms Head to the west of Swansea. Then at 2230 hrs, the Do 217 flown by *Hptm.* Hermann Euler, *Staffelkapitän* of 5./KG 2, crashed into a farmhouse at Beaminster in Dorset. Thirty-two-year-old Euler had minimal combat experience, having only been posted to II./KG 2 from training at the end of September 1942; he was given command of 5./KG 2 just over two weeks before his death. His aircraft on fire, Euler attempted to crash-land only to plough through an orchard at South Buckham Farm, losing the aircraft's wings in the process. The fuselage then broke in two, the rear fuselage and tail careering away to the left of the farmhouse, while the remainder ploughed through the calf house, then the dairy, and finally came to a stop with what was left of the nose in the farmhouse kitchen. Amazingly, the farmer, Arthur

Swaffield, his wife Phillipa and their year-old son Freddie were upstairs either getting ready for bed or asleep, and were unharmed. Claims for Hubenthal's Do 217 can be attributed to either Plt Off Harry Newton (who claimed two destroyed, one probably destroyed and one damaged off the coast) or Flt Lt George 'Jamie' Jameson who claimed a Do 217 destroyed off the Gower Peninsula (his Beaufighter being damaged in the combat). Euler's Do 217 was the victim of Wg Cdr Rupert Clerke.

II./KG 2 suffered two more losses when one crew became lost and bailed out near Laval and another suffered engine failure, with three crew killed and one wounded in the subsequent crash-landing. Finally, an aircraft flown by *Fw.* Friedrich Brandt of 5./KG 40 was attacked by a Boston intruder of 605 Sqn flown by either Fg Off Rae Smart or Sgt Jerzy Brochocki and crashed at Evreux with three crew wounded and one killed. As to Swansea, which was the focus of the Luftwaffe's attention that night, some damage was caused to the docks, and even 125 Sqn's airfield at Fairwood Common, while the ports of Swansea and Port Talbot were closed due to the fear of mines. Within the city itself, 32 high-explosive bombs were reported as being dropped as well as numerous incendiary and Firepot bombs. Considerable damage was done to business premises and shops, and 34 civilians were killed, 58 seriously injured and 52 slightly injured. The Holzmann crew from 4./KG 40, which had taken part in the Plymouth attack three nights before, reported dropping two SC 500 and the contents from two ABB 500 munitions containers as well as four SC 50 bombs on Swansea.

The remainder of February 1943 appears to have been much quieter, with minelaying the focus of effort, but that did not stop Wg Cdr Charles Miller of 29 Sqn shooting down two 2./KG 2 minelayers on the night of 26 February 1943, with the deaths of *Uffz.* Alexander Wenzel and *Ofw.* Paul Giller and their crews.

Meanwhile, further east, trials and training for the Hs 293 with *Maj.* Franz Hollweck's *Lehr-und Erprobungskommando* 15 (formerly *Versuchsstaffel* 293) and *Fritz* X with *Hptm.* Ernst Hetzel's *Lehr-und Erprobungskommando* 21 (formerly KG.z.b.V. 21), were proceeding, albeit slowly, and it would be another six months before Do 217s equipped with these new weapons would go into action. Within the next three months these units would become II. and III./KG 100 respectively in preparation for going into action.

* * *

Towards the end of 1942, the *Nachtaufklärungsstaffel* began converting from the Do 17 to Do 217 E-4 and then, in early 1943, the unit began converting to the Do 217 K-1. Very little is known about these units which first appeared in May 1941 and operated over the Eastern Front.

1./*Nachtaufklärungsstaffel* had formed at Suwalaki in June 1941 and suffered its first Do 217 casualty in November 1942. It would soon be joined by 2./*Nachtaufklärungsstaffel* operating out of Dubowa – which would not lose its first Do 217 until January 1943 – and then 3./*Nachtaufklärungsstaffel* operating from Kowno and which would lose its first Do 217 in November 1942. These units would finally be joined by 4./*Nachtaufklärungsstaffel* in August 1942 which would not lose its first Do 217 until April 1943. They operated a mixture of aircraft – initially the Do 17 M and P, joined by the He 111 H-6 in mid-1942 and the Do 215 B-4/B-5.

Uffz. Hermann Kühn flew his first operational flight in a Do 17 with 1./*Nachtaufklärungsstaffel* on 23 July 1941 and by the end of the year he had completed 24 flights. Flying both the He 111 and Do 17, he then moved to 4./*Nachtaufklärungsstaffel* at the start of September 1942 and his first flight in a Do 217 was 27 November 1942. He would make his first operational flight in a Do 217 on 12 January 1943 from Kharkov but would continue to fly both the Do 17 and Do 217 on operations. The Do 17 is no longer mentioned in his logbook from July 1943 onwards, by which time he had converted to the Do 217 M. His last recorded flight was in a Do 217 on 18 March 1945, by which time he had flown at least 207 operational reconnaissance missions all over the Eastern Front. It is not surprising that he was awarded both the *Ehrenpokal* and *Deutsches Kreuz in Gold.*

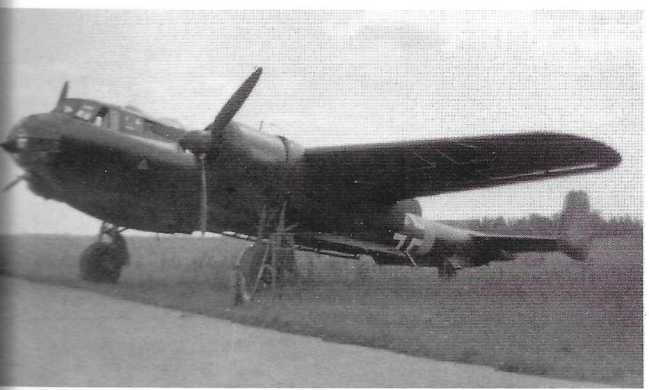
By the start of February 1943, all *Nachtaufklärungsstaffel* were reporting operating the Do 217, as well as the other types but only over the Soviet Union, and the first recorded combat loss was a Do 217 E-4 of 2./*Nachtaufklärungsstaffel* flown by *Oblt.* Heinz Laubisch on 29 January 1943, which went missing on a reconnaissance mission in the Toropez-Basary-Nelidowa area. The *Beobachter* was *Hptm.* Hans-Eberhard Scholvin who was the *Staffelkapitän* and all four crew are still recorded as missing. Laubisch, Scholvin and *Bordfunker Uffz.* Alfred Muhr were all awarded the *Deutsches Kreuz in Gold* posthumously, having previously been awarded the *Ehrenpokal.* Scholvin, a highly experienced reconnaissance flyer, had been injured in combat near Moscow in a Do 17 on 26 May 1942, while Laubisch was injured in an accident in a Do 215 B-5, showing proof of their experience and that, despite little being known about them, what they were doing was regarded by the Luftwaffe as deserving of awards for bravery.

* * *

If February 1943 had ended quietly for the Do 217 units in the West, that would all change starting on 3 March 1943. That night saw three waves of attacks on London and the use of SD2 anti-personnel 'Butterfly Bombs' which had first been used against RAF bomber airfields in eastern England with a degree of success at the end of October 1940. These small cylindrical bombs, three inches in diameter, 3.5 inches long and weighing just under 4.5 lbs, were carried in special containers, the typical one being the AB 250-3 which contained 108 SD2s. After release, the container broke open so as to scatter the bombs over a wider area and, as they fell, the bomb's case sprang open to

Flt Lt Jamie Jameson and Fg Off Norman Crooks of 125 Sqn who claimed a Do 217 off the Gower Peninsula on the night of 16 February 1943.

Below: The fuselage band would indicate that this Do 217 E-4 belonged to a Nachtaufklärungsstaffel operating on the Eastern Front.



form wings which armed the fuse and even helped them snag on telephone wires or roofs. They could then explode on impact, delayed detonation, or if moved or disturbed.

Over 364 SD2s were dropped on Essex with about 60 reported as having landed on the London Thames Haven Oil Wharves near Stanford-le-Hope in Essex. Sgt Tom Hall of 22 Bomb Disposal Company Royal Engineers was awarded the George Medal for disposing of 81 such bombs at Mountnessing between 4 and 9 March 1943.

Fw. Günter Vestewig and his crew had joined 1./KG 2 in October 1942. Losses had been so heavy that they were engaged in an intensive training programme for the next four months in order to hopefully bring the *Geschwader* back to full strength. Three crews were killed in training accidents in December 1942 and they were not replaced, so achieving full strength was nigh impossible. Vestewig and his crew would fly their first mission, minelaying near Dover, in February 1943 and after another three such sorties, they took part in the Swansea attack on 16 February. On 3 March, Vestewig would take part in two attacks on London. The first, with *Maj.* Karl Kessel, his *Gruppenkommandeur*, as observer, saw them fly from Gilze-Rijen to Ramsgate at low level laden with two 500-kg and eight 50-kg bombs, after which they pulled up and successfully dropped their bombs south of the Thames but returned with one engine on fire. On arriving back, Vestewig tried to get some sleep before the second attack. Woken by his observer, *Ogefr.* Gerhard Polzin, his friend – *Fw.* Herbert Richter – who had also flown on the first mission, told him that he had a premonition and did not want to fly but felt duty bound to go. He took off ahead of the Vestewig crew and this time the route was via Dover to London. Richter flew one side of Dover, Vestewig the other, and on approaching the coast, Günter saw Richter's aircraft hit by Flak and burst into a ball of flames. There were no survivors. No major damage was inflicted that night but a tragic accident saw 178 civilians killed and 60 seriously injured when a salvo of defensive rockets panicked people who were sheltering at Bethnal Green underground station, most of whom were then suffocated by the sheer weight of bodies. KG 2 lost four aircraft to Flak that night with no survivors while it would appear that *Uffz.* Emil Dansinger's aircraft from 4./KG 2 was possibly shot down by Flt Lt Dick Bennell in a Boston of 418 Sqn. Bennell claimed a Do 217 three miles south-south-east near Deelen at 2245 hrs although Dansinger and his crew reported bailing out near Antwerp at 2151 hrs.

Fw. Günter Vestewig of 1./KG 2, taken POW 8 March 1943.

The remains of Günter Vestewig's Do 217 E-4, W.Nr. 5526, U5+EH, at Fernhurst, West Sussex. (via Saunders)

II./KG 40 would lose its first Do 217 on the night of 6 March 1943 whilst engaged in mining the Humber Estuary. *Hptm.* Karl Janoth of 5./KG 40 failed to return; the reason for his demise is not known.

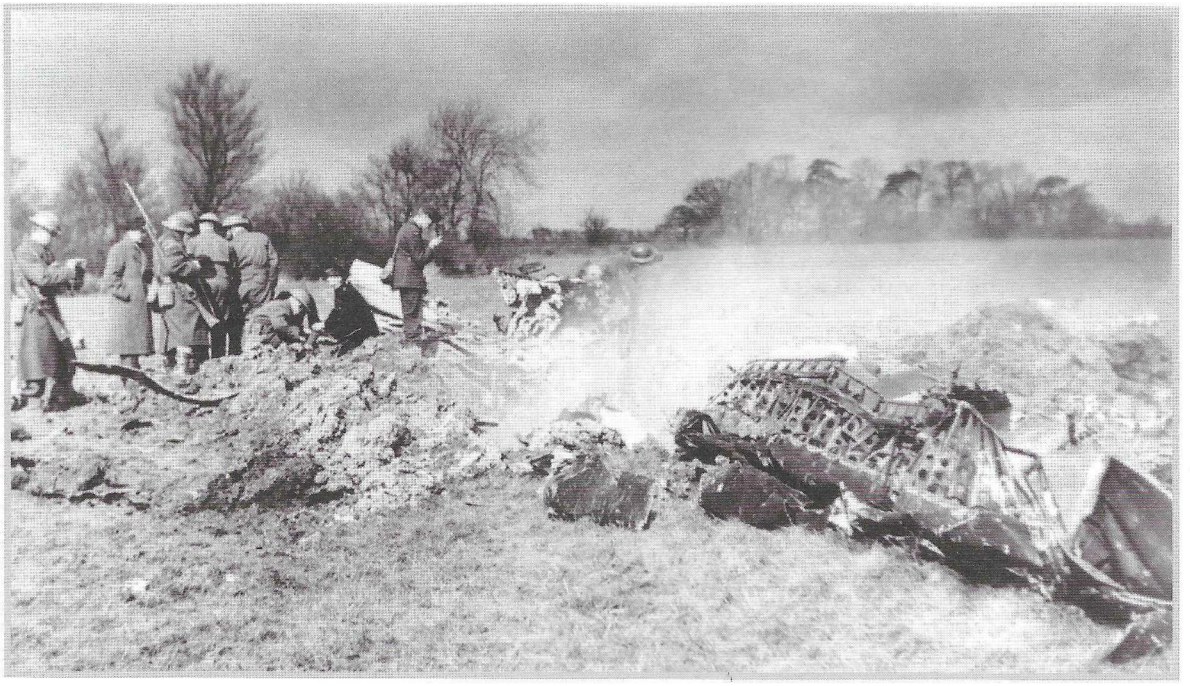
On the night of 7 March, the target was Southampton Docks with 37 aircraft taking off at two-minute intervals, *Fw.* Vestewig of 1./KG 2 getting airborne at 2258 hrs. He then headed for Le Havre at an altitude of 1500 m, but arrived 10 minutes early and had to head west and then east, back to the start point. He then headed north climbing to 4000 m, made for Selsey Bill, after which he and his crew would turn west to attack Southampton from north-west to south-east. Close to Midhurst in West Sussex, their flight came to a sudden end.

Sqn Ldr Geoff Goodman and Fg Off Bill Thomas of 29 Sqn had been chasing the Do 217 for five minutes, watching it jinking violently. They then closed to 150 yds and gave the still jinking bomber a three-second burst of both cannon and machine gun:

> 'A large explosion was seen on the inboard of the port engine. Beaufighter then drew away slightly to port and closed in again at 140 mph as the e/a lost speed, giving it a further three to four second burst. He saw another violent explosion. E/a practically stalled and the Beaufighter climbed away to avoid collision. Pilot then saw a large fire and explosions on the ground approximately south-west of Horsham at 0045 hrs.'

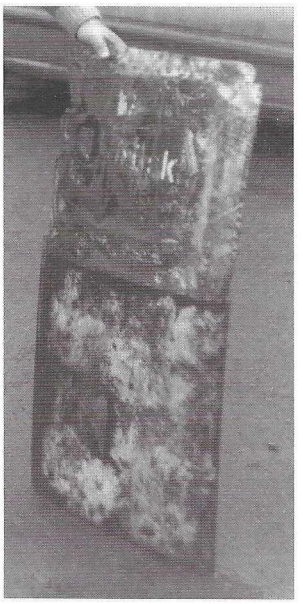
The German pilot recalls what happened next:

> 'Suddenly there were sparks in the cockpit and I heard glass breaking and the intercom stopped working. Between the starboard engine and fuselage I could see flames. Then we could see flames coming from the starboard engine. I turned the aircraft on its nose and dived to extinguish the flames which got smaller but when I levelled off, they got bigger than before. I couldn't keep the plane level and we were now in a left-hand downward spiral. There was no chance of reaching the French coast and the danger of explosion was too great. I gave the order to bail out – my observer cut the radio cable on my helmet and what happened next cannot be certain but my radio operator is buried at Chichester, my flight engineer was reported missing, my observer wounded by splinters in the nose, chin, left hand and knee, and I was seriously wounded with a fractured skull, broken ribs and a shot through my shin.'



The last resting place of Oblt. Ernst Schneiderbauer's Do 217 E-4, W.Nr. 5441, U5+BL, of 3./KG 2, Great Stainton, 12 March 1943.

The Bola hatch door was jettisoned by the crew of W.Nr. 5441 and landed at Long Pasture Farm, Little Stainton.



The attack was somewhat of a disaster with the RAF plotting some 30 aircraft 'making landfall between the Isle of Wight and Hastings and having apparently no main objective.' Flt Lt Willum Hoy and Wg Cdr Vernon Wood of 604 Sqn each claimed to have each destroyed another aircraft, the only one lost being from 9./KG 2 flown by *Ofw.* Heinz Ahrens, which came down south of the Isle of Wight.

Two nights later it was the turn of Hull to be attacked by KG 2 and Portsmouth to be hit by II./KG 40, the latter having remained at Evreux. KG 2 reported one aircraft from 3./KG 2 missing with another two aircraft lost in accidents, while II./KG 2 had one aircraft crashing at St Aubin in France with three crew wounded and one killed. It would be another two nights before the Do 217s returned, this time to Newcastle, which would be the target for two consecutive nightly raids and would see Fighter Command claiming five Do 217s destroyed and two probably destroyed. KG 2 lost two in combat and 6./KG 40 one – one of the KG 2 losses was flown by the experienced *Oblt.* Ernst Schneiderbauer of 3./KG 2. Their task that night was to mark the target and they had just begun gliding in to attack with bomb doors open when Flt Lt John 'Jack' Willson, assisted by Fg Off Doug Bunch, of 219 Sqn opened fire:

> 'Many strikes were seen on the starboard side of the fuselage in line with the wing and pieces flew off and struck our machine. E/a lost height, still turning to starboard, and disappeared immediately. The Nav/Rad then told the pilot there was a burning wreck on the ground below.'

Ernst relates what happened:

> 'Time of the attack was 2325 hrs and after a low-level flight across the North Sea, at a turning point 50 km south of Newcastle I climbed up to 3300 m. We were above the north-west part of Newcastle and suddenly it was like daylight when the pathfinders of II./KG 2 dropped their flares and my radio operator shouted "Nightfighter coming from the right!" I turned sharply to the right but the nightfighter burst went through the cockpit diagonally. The port windscreen, instrument panel, intercom and port engine were destroyed and the tailplane damaged so I gave the order to bail out and tried to keep the plane level with the right engine, rudder and by trimming. Meanwhile the flight engineer tried to open the bottom hatch – I thought it took a long time before he succeeded. He and the radio operator jumped first, I jumped last just after the observer.'

All four crew were captured and the crash caused a bit of a stir in Great Stainton, north-east of Darlington, as Bert Walton recalls:

> 'I remember this crash as I was the ambulance driver who picked up the pilot. I picked up quite a few Germans but this one sticks in my mind most for when we arrived at Great Stainton Grange, we found the pilot sitting at a table not looking too happy, with three-quarters of a bottle of whisky. We thought it funny as the pilot got a bottle of whisky and we did not even get a cup of tea which would have been lovely on a cold night! We picked up another airman about two miles away being held by the Home Guard. I think he had a broken leg.'

The other airman was the *Beobachter Uffz.* Martin Hoffmann, confirmed by Ernst Schneiderbauer, who continues the story:

> 'The Home Guard stood around me and after some talking they learned I was a German pilot and not a Frenchman or any other foreigner in the RAF. The men were very friendly and carried me to a nearby house. In a room they took me to the fireplace so I could warm up. In fact I trembled because of the cold, not anger! Then a lady, with a fur coat over her long underwear, entered the room and offered me a glass of whisky. I hope Bert Walton believes me, I really needed the whisky more than he did! Lady Beatrice Scrope stays in my mind for her human gesture to a wartime opponent!'

Oblt. Hartmuth Holzapfel of 6./KG 6 was shot down flying Do 217 E-4, W.Nr. 4393, U5+LP, which crashed in Lincolnshire on 15 March 1943. He and his crew were all captured.

Just two Do 217s were lost that night – Ernst's and another from 6./KG 40 flown by *Uffz.* Erich Schuld, which is believed to have come down in the sea off Hartlepool with the deaths of all four crew. Jack Willson would claim another Do 217 destroyed and one probably destroyed that night while Fg Off Arthur Wallace and Sgt Alec Hollingsworth claimed a Do 217 probably destroyed and destroyed respectively.

In the nights that followed, KG 2 would lose aircraft attacking Newcastle (12 March 1943 – *Lt.* Bernhard Gerlach of 5./KG 2 failed to return, probably shot down by Flt Lt John Hooper and Fg Off Doug Reid of 219 Sqn, both of whom were wounded by return fire and made a wheels-up landing back at RAF Scorton); Sunderland (14 March – an aircraft of 5./KG 2 flown by *Uffz.* Herbert Gahl crashed on the return flight off the Dutch coast with all crew killed, possibly as a result of one of two claims by 219 Sqn, one of which, a Beaufighter, flown by Sqn Ldr James Morton, was hit by return fire and came back on one engine but was subsequently written off; the Nav/Rad, Flt Lt Charles Strange bailed out but died of exposure before he could be rescued); Grimsby (15 March – *Oblt.* Hartmut Holzapfel of 6./KG 2 was shot down by Flt Lt Jack Willson of 219 Sqn at North Thoresby, Lincolnshire); Norwich (18 March – *Uffz.* Horst Toifel of 1./KG 2 was shot down by Fg Off Doug Williams of 410 Sqn near Kings Lynn, and *Hptm.* Hans Hansen of 6./KG 2 was shot down by Fg Off Percy Allen of 68 Sqn off Winterton); and Hartlepool (22 March – aircraft flown by *Fw.* Rudolf Wenkel of 6./KG 2 and *Fw.* Fritz Flohr of 7./KG 2 failed to return: one allegedly crashed into Hartlepool Dock and the other off the coast at Cullercoats; the only claim by Fg Off Bob Sargent of 219 Sqn was for a Do 217 damaged).

This string of losses would be followed on the night of 24 March 1943 when Edinburgh was the target of 52 aircraft from KG 2, II./KG 40 and Ju 88s of KG 6. Again, losses were bad for KG 2 with *Ofw.* Fritz Kalbfleisch of 3./KG 2 flying into the Cheviot Hills, and *Oblt.* Martin Plischke and *Uffz.* Willi Schneider of 7./KG 2 apparently being damaged by nightfighters after which they crashed on land in the Scottish borders and Northumberland respectively. To make matters worse, another aircraft from 6./KG 2 collided with a radio mast over Holland and crashed near Katwijk killing *Uffz.* Christian Kiechler and his crew. The only claim for a Do 217 was one probably destroyed 15 miles east of Tynemouth by Fg Off Philip Robinson of 219 Sqn, a claim which cannot be matched to any losses. One of the pilots involved was *Uffz.* Werner Greulich of 5./KG 40 who, after his capture on 15 April 1943, told his captors more about the attack:

> 'The crew were briefed to bomb the Edinburgh harbour installations and claimed that theirs was the only aircraft from II./KG 40 successfully to reach the objective. The wind forecast given at the briefing proved incorrect and as a result the aircraft was driven off course in a south-westerly direction. Cloud was 8/10ths to 9/10ths at 1,600 ft. The pilot crossed the North Sea at a height of about 30 ft and climbed above cloud base on approaching the coast. The aircraft came over Edinburgh from the south and the crew were able to identify the city through a fortuitous gap in the clouds. After circling for a short time above this gap, they dropped the bombs with unobserved results. Shortly after they had left the target considerable medium and heavy Flak was encountered over the southern shore of the Firth of Forth and when the crew dived through the cloud to 1,300 ft to evade this, they found themselves immediately over a convoy which sent up the most intense Flak fire that the crew had ever experienced. The pilot flew straight over the convoy, continuing in the dive to 150 ft and then came down to almost sea level for the homeward flight. The total losses for this operation amounted to nine aircraft of which three were from KG 2 and six from KG 6. Of these nine, six, which crashed on land, were reported at the time – three of these were from KG 2 and three from KG 6. A seventh aircraft, a Ju 88, crashed on a sandbank in the Firth of Forth but the unit to which it belonged could not be established.'

KG 6 lost five aircraft, with a sixth crashing in Holland after take-off. The night cost the lives of 13 aircrew from KG 2 with another three captured, while 24 were killed from KG 6. It had not been a good night and the RAF had played a minimal part in their demise.

The losses would end for both *Geschwader* on the night of 28 March 1943 when, during an attack on Norwich, *Fw.* Paul Huth of 4./KG 2 and *Uffz.* Hans-Joachim Menke of 6./KG 40 failed to return, victims of former Battle of Britain pilot Fg Off Josef Vopalecky of 68 Sqn and Fg Off John Beckett of 157 Sqn off Southwold.

March 1943 had been a costly one for the Do 217 units and coincided with the appointment of *Obstlt.* Dietrich Peltz as *Angriffsführer* England whose job was to coordinate and intensify the bombing of mainland Britain. KG 2 suffered the total loss of 25 Do 217s with II./KG 40 losing four aircraft and, in human terms, this represented 76 killed or missing and 13 captured from KG 2 with 13 killed or missing from II./KG 40. As early as 11 March 1943, captured crews had stated that losses until then had been heavy, few if any replacements were received and many crews had little or no operational experience. This would be made worse for KG 2 when in mid-June 1943, II./KG 40 was withdrawn from operations. Then between 11 and 14 April 1943, III./KG 2 moved from Soesterberg to Coulommiers, east of Paris. *Oblt.* Josef Steudel of 8./KG 2 explains why:

> 'This assignment was to prepare new crews for deployment to the Front. I welcomed the change because I needed the rest.'

This also enabled III./KG 2 to convert to the Do 217 K-1 and then the M-1, and is the reason why the next combat loss for the *Gruppe* was not until 15 August 1943, five days after the *Gruppe* returned to Gilze-Rijen with a new *Gruppenkommandeur* when *Hptm.* Albert Schreiweis, *Staffelkapitän* of 9./KG 2, took over from *Maj.* Kurt Leythäuser, at III.*Gruppe* which was seriously under strength with just 15 aircraft. That first mission would prove to be a costly one with five aircraft shot down and 19 aircrew killed or missing and almost saw the demise of the new *Gruppenkommandeur* and his crew.

The first Do 217 to be lost came on the night of 4 April 1943 when *Uffz.* Martin Hornung of 3./KG 2 was apparently damaged by an unidentified nightfighter during a mining mission to the Thames Estuary and ditched 20 km west of Vlissingen; he was the only survivor, being picked up later from his dinghy. Unusually, the next loss occurred when a crew from I./KG 2 was training at St André – when *Lt.* Walter Held and his crew collided with a Beaufighter 15 km north-west of Dreux at 2246 hrs on 9 April 1943. At 2202 hrs Sqn Ldr Hugh Venables, who had been awarded the DFC just three weeks before, lifted off

Oberst Dietrich Peltz, the Angriffsführer England, inspecting III./KG 2 at Soesterberg, March 1943. Behind him is Maj. Kurt Leythäuser, Gruppenkommandeur of III./KG 2.

Hptm. Albert Schreiweis, Gruppenkommandeur of III./KG 2, from mid-August 1943. A former member of the Legion Condor, as shown by the Spanish Cross he is wearing, he was wounded as an Oberfeldwebel with Stab III./KG 76 on 15 May 1940, but then was commissioned in 1941 and flew with KG 2. He would have to wait until January 1944 to be awarded the German Cross in Gold and he survived the war.

from RAF Debden in a Boston of 418 Sqn. He was on an intruder mission to the airfields of Melun and Brétigny but failed to return; it is believed that he did indeed collide with the Do 217 and he and his crew, WO Don McKay and Plt Off Henry Baker, were buried at St André de L'Eure.

Losses recommenced for both KG 2 and II./KG 40 on the night of 11 April 1943 when *Hptm.* Ferdinand Schwankert and *Fw.* Johannes Kiessling from 5./KG 2, and *Uffz.* Georg Huber from 5./KG 40, failed to return from minelaying. The loss of all three cannot be ascertained for certain but the body of the *Bordfunker* from the Schwankert crew was picked up from the Thames Estuary on 12 April and the body of the *Bordfunker* from the Huber crew was washed ashore at Shoeburyness on 19 May.

The next losses came on the night of 13 April 1943 when *Uffz.* Paul Sattler of 3./KG 2 failed to return from mining off Dover. It has been suggested that the loss was due to a Mustang of 400 Sqn flown by Flt Lt Duncan Grant who claimed a Do 217 near the airfield at Melun at 2230 hrs, but this would, in fact, appear to be a Do 217 E-4 on a training flight from 11./KG 2 flown by *Lt.* Walter Dohrn which was shot down by a 'nightfighter' and the crew bailed out. The aircraft crashed at Champdeuil to the east of the airfield at Melun-Villaroche. With Allied air superiority on the increase, things were equally dangerous for experienced and inexperienced Do 217 crews, as the following night would prove.

Chelmsford was the target for the night of 14 April 1943 by 33 Do 217s from I. and II./KG 2 and II./KG 40 and in the region of 40 Ju 88s from KG 6. There were just three nightfighter claims for Do 217s that night. Sqn Ldr Peter Green of 85 Sqn got the first Do 217 over the Thames Estuary at 0007 hrs. This was followed by Flt Lt Geoff Howitt of 85 Sqn off Clacton at 0041hrs and, finally, by Flt Lt James Benson of 157 Sqn whose victim came down near Colchester at 0045 hrs. It would appear that Peter Green got *Uffz.* Günther Steinpass of 4./KG 40 whose aircraft crashed into the Thames Estuary killing all four crew. Geoff Howitt probably got *Uffz.* Werner Greulich of 5./KG 40 whose aircraft was wrecked attempting a forced landing at Bocking's Elm near Clacton – he and two crew were captured but the *Bordfunker* was killed. This crew was on their twelfth operational flight having flown their first, what they described as a lone 'terror attack' on Brighton, on the night of 1 March 1943; they told their captors what happened on their last flight:

> 'F8+EN took off from Gilze-Rijen at 2329 hrs, flew low over the North Sea and, when approaching the English coast at 0031 hrs, climbed to about 10,000 ft. The pilot then flew up the Blackwater Estuary, turned north-west and headed to the west of Chelmsford taking evasive action to avoid Flak and searchlights. The aircraft was then attacked by a nightfighter; the pilot took violent evasive action but the nightfighter followed closely and attacked. During the ensuing combat the bombs were jettisoned somewhere near the mouth of the Blackwater Estuary. The *Bordfunker* reported hits, first in the starboard wing and engine and soon after the port engine. The aircraft lost height rapidly and at 1,000 ft the pilot gave the order to bail out. Only the *Beobachter* succeeded in leaving the aircraft and the pilot therefore endeavoured to make a forced landing. He was lucky in as much as when the aircraft was coming in to land, the starboard wing hit a large tree. The crash was inevitable but the pilot and gunner were able to extricate themselves from the wreckage and escaped with injuries. The *Bordfunker* was killed.'

Finally, James Benson shot down *Uffz.* Walter Schmürr of 6./KG 2, whose bomber crashed at Layer Breton Heath in Essex with the pilot and two crew captured and, again, the *Bordfunker* was killed. There was one other aircraft lost, that of *Uffz.* Franz Tannenberger of 6./KG 2; he and his crew were reported missing. A final casualty was from 2./KG 2 which was hit by Flak and an engine set on fire. *Uffz.* Ferdinand Günther bailed out, for the pilot to regain control and land safely while the luckless *Bordfunker* was never seen alive again.

The wreckage of the 5./KG 40 aircraft revealed a new weapon, namely the *Giesskanne* (watering can). This was a modification (*Rüstsatz* 23) which fitted two MG 81Zs in the tail cone where the dive brake used to be, the firing of which was controlled by a crew-member using a rear-facing periscope; the intelligence report on the Greulich crew made mention of this:

> 'From an examination of the F8+EN it has been found that this aircraft was fitted with electrical circuits for three fixed rearward-firing guns connected to a central switch marked '*Giesskanne*'. The guns themselves were not fitted.

The crew was interrogated on this subject. They stated that no fixed rearward-firing guns had yet been mounted in aircraft of II./KG 40 but that the necessary wiring had been installed in some of the aircraft; the fitting of this additional armament would only be a question of time. They believed that the guns to be fitted were MG 17s but they had no instruction on the subject and had no idea how they would be aimed. It was presumed that aiming would be a matter more of luck than of judgement but they felt that these guns would at least tend to discourage nightfighters.'

The losses on 14 and 15 April 1943 would be the last ones for the month despite operations continuing, albeit at a much quieter pace. But for one Scottish city there would be a nasty surprise. The logbook for *Uffz.* Heinz Holzmann of 4./KG 40 states that in the early morning of 20 April 1943, he flew from Gilze-Rijen to Stavanger in Norway and then at 2101 hrs the following day he took off loaded with four SC 500 bombs to attack Aberdeen. Thirty aircraft from I. and II./KG 2 and an unknown number from II./KG 40 had flown to Stavanger and the attack by 29 (one aircraft was probably unserviceable) aircraft was successful and no aircraft were lost. The British report reads as follows:

'The attack was reported to be the heaviest the city has experienced. While damage by High Explosives was widespread and numerous large fires occurred in the industrial area, no damage of a major character was done to any Key Point targets but serious damage by blast was caused to a section of the Broadford Works of Richard Ltd. Production here is temporarily stopped but is expected to be resumed shortly. Damage to a lesser extent was also caused by fire to the main gasworks of the Aberdeen Corporation but supplies to vital consumers were not affected. Other essential utility services were also affected at many points but the damage caused was not of a serious character. The LNER system was hit at two points in the area but without serious effect on essential traffic.'

The attack began at 2217 hrs and lasted for an hour, during which 127 bombs landed on and around the city killing 98 civilians and 27 soldiers, the latter's barracks having been hit. Richard Ltd made canvas hose tubing – the blast from a nearby bomb caused severe damage to a corner of the factory. The testing department was wrecked, 6,500 sq. ft. of roofing destroyed, as well as the electrical cable being cut. However limited production began on 24 April and it was predicted that full production would resume at the start of May 1943.

Heinz Holzmann flew back to Gilze-Rijen the following morning, but on 25 April the only casualty of this event occurred when, on the return flight to Holland, *Fw.* Günter Stahr and his crew from 4./KG 2 were killed when they collided with a Fw 190 of 1./JG 11 flown by *Uffz.* Hermann Gagla. Their Do 217 crashed in the sea off Lindesnes. April 1943 was much less costly in terms of aircraft (eight from KG 2 and three from II./KG 40) and aircrew (32 killed and three captured from KG 2 and nine killed and three captured from II./KG 40). One final unusual loss, especially for the theatre, was a Do 217 K-1 of *Flugbereitschaft/Luftflottenkommando* 2 flown by *Ofw.* Sieghart Glashagel, which went missing on a flight between Rome and Tunis on 22 April 1943. Its loss was attributed to Allied fighters but no claims match even remotely. However, *Uffz.* Hans-Wilhelm Ellmers of 1./JG 53 claimed the destruction of a B-25 and none of this type was lost or damaged that day. Three crew and three passengers were reported missing.

May 1943 would be the last full month of Do 217 operations for II./KG 40 before it was withdrawn and began converting to the Me 410. It also saw the first accidents involving two Do 217 K-2s of III./KG 100 – proof that training was ramping up, and the continued existence, for the time being, of Do 217 E-5s being operated by *Lehr-und Erprobungskommando* 15, which was soon to become II./KG 100. Franz Selinger, who worked for Dornier, described the Do 217 K-2 carriers in a post-war account:

'The Do 217 K-2 was designed to carry two FX 1400 guided bombs and had one ETC 2000/XII bomb rack under each wing between the fuselage and engine nacelle. When attacking over long distances, one bomb was carried under the starboard wing where the *Beobachter* could observe the bomb from release until it reached the visual field of the *Lotfe* 7C bombsight when it could be guided onto the target. The K-3 then replaced the K-2 – it was able to carry two FX 1400 between fuselage and engines or two Hs 293 under the outer wing panels.'

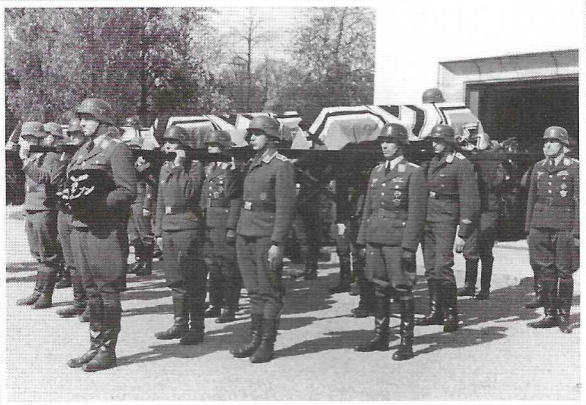
The various *Nachtjagd* units (namely II./NJG 1, NJG 3, NJG 4 and II./NJG 101) suffered a number of accidents but no combat losses. However, their numbers were much less than the other units. For example, in May 1943 I./NJG 3 had an establishment of one Do 217 J and ten Do 217 N, while II./NJG 3 had one Do 217 J and sixteen Do 217 N. In NJG 4, it was I.*Gruppe* with two Do 217 J and nine Do 217 N, II.*Gruppe* with eleven Do 217 N and III.*Gruppe* with three Do 217 J and two Do 217 N. IV./NJG 5 (which would become I./NJG 100 in August 1943) had ten Do 217 J and one Do 217 N. The training unit II./NJG 101 had the most on its establishment with twenty-seven Do 217 Js.

May 1943 started badly for KG 2. After a few nights of uneventful mining missions, the first major attack of the month was against Norwich by 43 Do 217s and 36 Ju 88s on the night of 4 May 1943. Although the city was hit, *Uffz.* Georg Högler of 2./KG 2 crashed near Eindhoven at 0117 hrs due to an accident (not as a result of being shot down by Fg Off Brian Williams of 605 Sqn three hours later as has been suggested), while the first Do 217 K-1 to be lost in combat, flown by *Uffz.* Erhard Corty of 4./KG 2, failed to return; apart from Brian Williams' claim, there were no other nightfighter claims that night. Another two aircraft were lost in accidents, the most serious being flown by *Lt.* Ernst Andres of *Stab.*/KG 2. His Do 217 K-1 developed engine problems and he crash-landed at Lansdmeer near Amsterdam. Carrying a crew of five which included the recently promoted *Geschwaderkommodore, Obstlt.* Walter Bradel, Andres and two others were badly injured while Bradel, who had not strapped himself in, and the gunner were killed. *Ritterkreuz*-winner Bradel was a serious loss to the *Geschwader* at such a critical time. He had flown in Spain, then flew Ju 52s over Norway in 1940 before moving to KG 2 in September of that year, taking command of 9.*Staffel*. In December 1941, by which time he had been awarded the *Ritterkreuz*, he took command of II./KG 2, then taking command of the *Geschwader* at the end of January 1943. He would be replaced by *Maj.* Karl Kessel, formerly *Kommandeur* of I./KG 2, and Kessel would be replaced as *Gruppenkommandeur* by *Hptm.* Franz Schönberger, *Staffelkapitän* of 2./KG 2.

WALTER BRADEL'S FUNERAL IN AMSTERDAM, 7 MAY 1943

Gruppenkommandeur, Hptm. Walter Bradel.

Right: Senior officers at Bradel's funeral included Oberst Dietrich Peltz (second from right with Ritterkreuz).



It would appear that both Do 217 units then went back to mining with the next casualties occurring on such a mission on 11 May 1943. *Lt.* Eberhard Pleiss of 3./KG 2 was apparently blinded by searchlights and crashed in the sea off Lowestoft, while *Lt.* Hans-Joachim Wolf of 6./KG 40 failed to return. This was followed by a major attack on Chelmsford on the night of 13 May which resulted in the loss of an aircraft from 2./KG 2 flown by *Lt.* Stefan Szamek, one from 4./KG 2 flown by *Lt.* Gerd Strufe and one from 6./KG 2 flown by *Lt.* Richard Ludwig. There was just one claim by a nightfighter which was by Fg Off Ron Watts of 157 Sqn for a Do 217 10 miles north-east of Colchester at 0207 hrs. His combat report stated:

> 'E/a was not taking evasive action. Closed in rapidly to 4,000 ft range where a visual of a Do 217 was obtained at 900 ft range. Gave two short bursts but no results observed. E/a was now taking violent evasive action. Closed in to 400 ft and heavy but inaccurate return fire was experienced from upper turret. Two short bursts were given and e/a's starboard engine burst into flames. Return fire ceased and e/a went into a very steep dive through clouds and was not seen again.'

At 0215 hrs, *Lt.* Richard Ludwig's Do 217 K-1 dived almost vertically into the ground from 8,000 ft at Bawdsey near Ipswich, totally burying itself. Returning crews noted that Flak was heavy, including Flak from ships, and it is thought that this aircraft suffered a direct hit by Flak but the time and location of the crash matches Ron Watts' combat.

Two nights later it was an attack on Sunderland which resulted in the loss of a Do 217 K-1 of 6./KG 2 to Fg Off Brian Keele of 604 Sqn; the body of the pilot, *Uffz.* Karl Roos, was washed ashore at Blackhall Rocks a month and a half later. The same night a Do 217 E-4 of 5./KG 40 collided with an obstacle and crashed in flames at Groet in Holland, killing *Ofw.* Johannes Golland and his crew.

On 17 May 1943, the scene of battle moved west when I./KG 2 moved to Rennes and II./KG 2 to Vannes and together with KG 6 and II./KG 40, they attacked Cardiff that night. The transfer was not without incident as the Do 217 E-4 flown by *Hptm.* Philipp von Alemann of 3./KG 2 suffered engine problems and was badly damaged in a forced landing north of St Aubin-des-Hayes in Normandy. Alemann was an experienced former transport pilot who began converting to the Do 217 in December 1942 and he had joined 3./KG 2 at the start of May 1943. His first operational flight in the Do 217 had been mining on the night of 11 May followed by the attack on Chelmsford two nights later. His injuries as a result of the crash-landing meant he did not fly again until 15 July 1943, by which time he had taken command of 1./KG 2 following the death of *Hptm.* Otto-Wilhelm Pohler on 13 June.

Cardiff reported being bombed and although nightfighters were reported by the German crews, there were no claims for Do 217s, which does not explain the losses of two aircraft from 3./KG 2 and one from 4./KG 40. To make matters worse, a Do 217 K-1 became lost and, low on fuel, crashed near Grand Champs at 0615 hrs with the deaths of *Lt.* Karl Preyer and two crew, while another from 2./KG 2 – flown by *Lt.* Wilhelm Polzer – crashed from unknown causes at Romazy, 50 km north-east of Rennes, killing all four crew.

The 23 May 1943 would see the last major attack of the month and the last attack by Do 217s of II./KG 40. The crew of *Uffz.* Heinz Holzmann of 4./KG 40 recorded its 29th operational flight since 4 January 1943, taking off from Gilze-Rijen at 0040 hrs to attack Sunderland and landing at 0446 hrs after having dropped two SC 500, four SC 50 and two ABB 500 bombs on the city. II./KG 40 would move to Memmingen in Germany at the start of June 1943 and *Uffz.* Heinz Holzmann would fly his first operational flight with the Me 410 as part of 14./KG 2 on 11 August; he would be killed in action on the night of

Above: KG 2's officers pay their last respects at Bradel's funeral. Oblt. Josef Steudel of 8./KG 2 is at sixth from left, while Oblt. Heinrich Meyer (2./KG 2) is eighth from left; both officers were awarded the German Cross in Gold, while Meyer has the Ritterkreuz.

8 November 1943. An aircraft from 1./KG 2 flown by *Ofw.* Herbert Mitzscherling and another from 5./KG 40, flown by *Lt.* Friedrich Weiss, failed to return, the only claim for a Do 217 being made by Sqn Ldr George Bower of 409 Sqn six miles east of Tynemouth at 0307 hrs.

In respect of other Do 217 combat units, the first accidents to Do 217 E-5s of II./KG 100 occurred this month, proof that *Lehr-und Erprobungskommando* 15 had been absorbed into the new unit – which was still not operational with the Hs 293 – while, again, there were losses to nightfighters as a result of operations although a few Do 217 J-1 and N-1s of 4./NJG 1, 5./NJG 3 and I./NJG 4 all suffered accidents.

By now, attempts were being made to give the Do 217 crews additional warning of the ever-improving RAF nightfighters. There was indeed a rear-warning radar, namely *Lichtenstein* BC/R FuG 214. However, fitment to aircraft was limited and although experienced observers were given limited operational training, it was unpopular as it required considerable concentration, which diverted the observer from his primary duties. *Oblt.* Josef Steudel of 8./KG 2 had this to say about *Lichtenstein*:

> 'There was constant experimenting with the tactics of engagement and technical improvements. One idea was to fit our aircraft with *Lichtenstein*. This attempt was short-lived and in my mind not in tune with reality.'

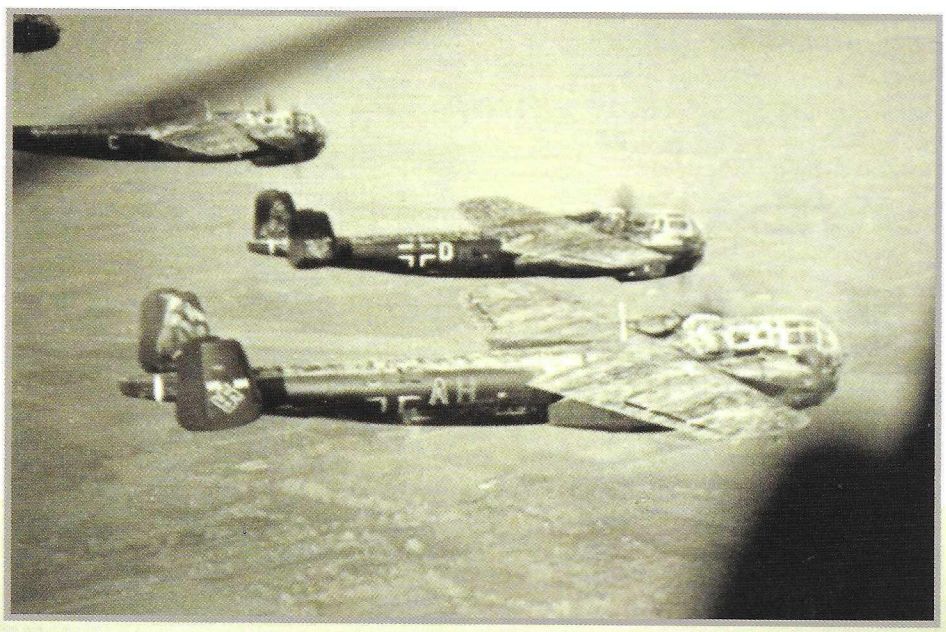
A crew from 7./KG 2 who were captured on 25 March 1943 provided their captors with relevant information:

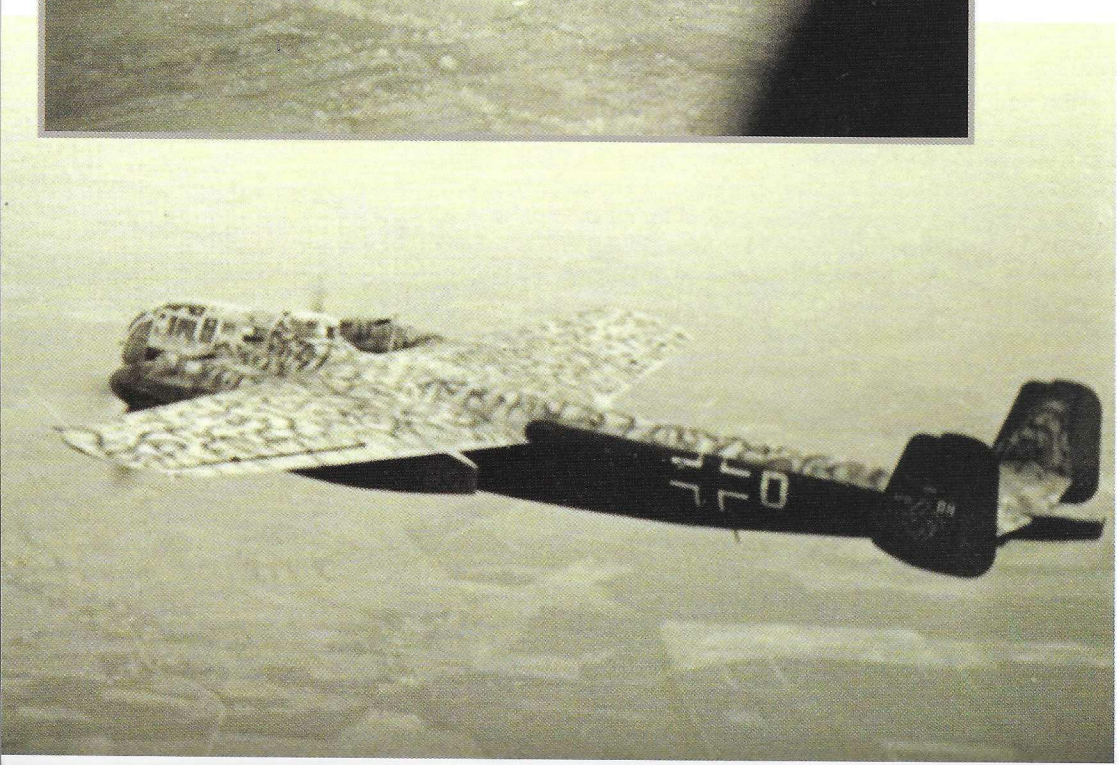
> 'Their aircraft was fitted with the *Lichtenstein Gerät* and the crew had in fact this on all their war flights. The *Beobachter's* [*Gefr.* Johann Maschel] reaction to it is that it entails too much concentration and he would prefer to look out and trust his own eyes. This crew also confirms that *Lichtenstein* is not yet very reliable and often goes wrong in operational use.'

June 1943 would be quieter for KG 2, with just I. and II./KG 2 carrying out operations with the Do 217 on the Western Front, III./KG 2 still carrying out training at Coulommiers. The *Geschwader* would suffer just three losses in combat this month – *Oblt.* Karl-Heinz Göllner of 3./KG 2 against London on the night of 4 June 1943; *Hptm.* Otto-Wilhelm Pöhler, *Staffelkapitän* of 1./KG 2, against Plymouth on 12 June 1943; and *Fw.* Friedrich Sünnemann of 5./KG 2 against Grimsby on 13 June 1943. Of these, the latter two were victims of nightfighters – Pöhler to Sgt Wilf 'Andy' Miller of 125 Sqn and Sünnemann to Fg Off David Wills of 68 Sqn (who that night was flying with 604 Sqn). Pöhler was another loss KG 2 could have done without. He had flown with 6./KG 55 in the Battle of France and had been shot down and taken prisoner on 13 May 1940. He had then flown with II./KG 40 before taking command of 9./KG 2 at the end of January 1943. He then became *Geschwader* Technical Officer in mid-April 1943 before taking command of 1./KG 2 just under a month before he was killed. His aircraft was the first Do 217 M-1 to be lost in combat.

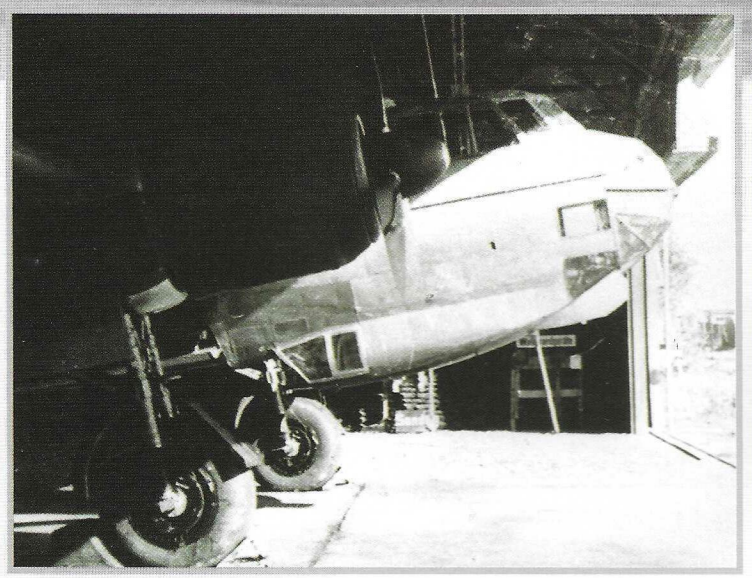
The attack on Grimsby on 13 June 1943 saw widespread use of the SD2 Butterfly Bomb. These 'Devil's Eggs', as the Germans called them, were found everywhere, particularly around the docks. They were found in homes, factories, hung from trees and from telephone lines. They became lodged in gutters and easily hid in long grass – one was found in the lighting gantry in the Palace Theatre, another in an outside toilet. About 200 were reported in Carr Lane Allotments and many more in Sydney Park, both of which remained closed for months. In total, the Germans dropped more than 2,000 of these bombs and claimed more than 30 lives in the first hour after the raid as people, wondering what they were, picked them up or disturbed them. In one incident, two women, believed to be Fanny Miller and her daughter Grace, living at 14 Eleanor Street, were asleep when an SD2 came through the ceiling and lodged in a rafter. One reached up for it and it exploded, killing them both. Although 66 civilians were killed in the actual bombing, the minimal death toll was believed to have been 114. People were still being killed a year later – on 18 May 1944, 57-year-old farmer John Johnson and 14-year-old Sydney Russell were ploughing at Wood Farm, Pyewipe, when they disturbed an SD2 which exploded. Johnson was killed and Sydney Russell died on the way to Grimsby and District Hospital. SD2s were still being discovered and disposed of in 1947. A British report makes interesting reading as to the German *raison d'être* of the attack:

Distinctively camouflaged Do 217 M-1s coded U5+AH, CH and DH of 1./KG 2, summer 1943. W.Nr. 40705, U5+AH, would be lost attacking Plymouth while flown by Staffelkapitän Hptm. Otto-Wilhelm Pöhler. W.Nr. 40728, U5+CH, was lost on service with 8./KG 2 attacking London on the night of 3 February 1944. (via Taghon)





Aircraft of Lehr-und Erprobungskommando 17, Chartres, September 1942.



A Do 217 E-4 of Erprobungskommando XY, Chartres, 1941-42.

Above and right: Maj. Hermann Schmidt, an experienced pathfinder pilot, took command of I./KG 66 as it began to form at the end of April 1943. He would be awarded the Ritterkreuz a year later.

'In view of our own plan to mix delayed action anti-personnel bombs among incendiaries containing a proportion of the explosive type, the German attack on Grimsby deserves special study as it contained all the above mentioned ingredients. According to our plan, a mixture of IB and explosive IB should deter the fire guards during the raid and so tend to promote appliance fires while the anti-personnel bombs should hinder appliance fire-fighters after the raid and so encourage widespread conflagration.'

As to the precise impact of the SD2, the report continues:

'The Butterfly Bombs appear to have been dropped exclusively in the AB 250-3 container. The Bomb Disposal Unit dealt with approximately 1,350 bombs of this type. The reason for such a high proportion of the bombs not exploding was probably that most of the bombs were fitted with the anti-disturbance fuse. The majority of the casualties were caused after the raid by people handling or otherwise disturbing the bombs. The anti-disturbance fuse has proved to be extremely sensitive and matters were complicated on some occasions by sympathetic detonations of bombs within a radius of 50-60 yds.'

By mid-1943, another Do 217 unit was in the process of being formed purely for pathfinder duties. In April 1943, 1./KG 66 was formed at Chartres from 15./KG 6, which itself was formed from *Lehr-und Erprobungskommando* 17. Its origins go further back to *Lehr-und Erprobungskommando* 100, also known as *Erprobungskommando* XY, which was commanded by *Hptm.* Siegfried Langer formerly of 2./KG 100, who would be killed in action over Wiltshire on 23 May 1942. Langer was replaced by *Oblt.* Hans Becker and then *Oblt.* Rudi Mohrmann, the latter having flown pathfinder missions with III./KG 26 in 1941. Although not yet fully operational, I./KG 66 suffered its first loss at 0040 hrs on 21 June 1943 when *Uffz.* Kurt Winter and his four crew were killed. Their Do 217 K-1 was probably shot down by a Boston flown by Flt Lt Massy Beveridge of 418 Sqn at Mesnil-St-Georges near Montdidier. Beveridge claimed a Do 217 destroyed near Coulommiers:

'An aircraft was seen by the gunner flashing navigation lights about 2/3 miles away. The intruder orbited to the north end of the runway and a second aircraft flew down the runway flashing its navigation lights four or five times. About five minutes later a third aircraft was seen on the downwind leg flashing its navigation lights. As it got over the end of the runway, it started flashing its navigation lights more rapidly. The Boston turned in and followed the e/a and engaged it as it was over the perimeter track with a two-second burst at 100 yds range from dead astern closing very rapidly. A blinding flash from the starboard engine illuminated it sufficiently to identify it as a Do 217. Intruder broke off in a tight turn to port losing height and seeing e/a below still burning navigation lights and emitting much smoke from the starboard engine. At this stage the Boston overshot as the e/a appeared to have done a port turn and was now flying at right angles to the centreline and was last seen emitting much smoke.'

Other losses in Do 217s in June 1943 seemed to be accidents suffered by the various *Nachtaufklärungsstaffel* on the Eastern Front and by II. and III./KG 100, still training for Hs 293 and *Fritz* X operations. Nightfighter losses were very light, and again were all due to accidents, but one notable loss was to the *Einsatzstaffel* of II./KG 101 which had been formed in February 1943 from *Kampfschulgeschwader* 1 and carried out trials and bombing evaluation. It had moved from Greifswald to Pskov-South in May 1943 for the operational testing of high-altitude bombing and on 8 June 1943, *Lt.* Eduard Steyrer's Do 217 E-4 was shot down by Flak near Volkhov.

Losses increased for KG 2 in July 1943: 18 Do 217s were lost in combat or accidents with 57 aircrew killed and two captured. Targets were the same as the previous month – London, Grimsby, Hull and minelaying sorties were also carried out – but there were some differences, in particular that on 6 July 1943 when the Luftwaffe announced it would concentrate attacks on industrial production such as those locations manufacturing aircraft engines and propellers.

However, despite the usual accidents, the first combat losses did not occur until 9 July. Due to poor weather conditions, eight Do 217s carried out a daylight, low-level attack against London as opposed to industrial manufacturing targets. Four aircraft attacked houses in the southern part of the capital while another pilot reported dropping two 500-kg and twelve 50-kg bombs on what he assumed was Tunbridge Wells at 1721 hrs. This was believed to have been East Grinstead and, spotting an army convoy, he dropped his bombs on London Road and the High Street with deadly effect; among the buildings hit was the Whitehall Cinema on London Road which was full at the time. The roof collapse killed many of the audience – a total of 108 people died that day and another 235 were injured. Two of the attackers failed to return. *Lt.* Hans-Helmut Dunzelt of 5./KG 2 made the mistake of flying over RAF Kenley at 300 ft – the ground defences opened fire, hitting the bomber, which then hit a hillside in a shallow angle near Bletchingley. At the same time, *Oblt.* Hermann Zink's Do 217 K-1 of 6./KG 2 dived into the ground at Bicknor in Kent. Almost simultaneously, a Mosquito of 85 Sqn flown by Flt Lt John Lintott with Plt Off George Gillings-Lax crashed at Boxley near Maidstone. Part of the report into their combat read as follows:

> 'The GCI controller reports that at 1719 hrs, Flt Lt Lintott was put onto a raid at 6,000 ft travelling on 020° and that a contact was obtained at 1724 hrs and held. At 1727 hrs, both blips which were merged ended and it was thought that this was due to both aircraft losing height rapidly.'

Both RAF crew and eight German aircrew died that afternoon.

If nightfighters were not bad enough, intruders by both night and day were causing problems for KG 2. For example, on 12 July 1943, Flt Lt Duncan Grant of 400 Sqn, who had previously shot down a Do 217 of 11./KG 2 near Melun on 13 April 1943, shot down a Do 217 M-1 of 9./KG 2 flown by *Uffz.* Friedrich Nieberlein 12 miles north-east of Chartres at 1710 hrs:

> 'While flying at zero feet in the area north of Chartres, two Do 217s were seen at 1,500 ft flying line astern about three miles apart. The Mustang passed underneath rear plane, did a tight turn towards aircraft and came in line astern at zero feet. When about 100 yds behind and underneath, they climbed up to dead astern at 400 yds. Flt Lt Grant opened with intermittent bursts for 10 seconds. Saw strikes all over fuselage and both engines began smoking. After closing to 100 yds port engine blew up with bright orange flames. Broke off attack and saw crew bail out. Aircraft started to turn to port losing height to 100 ft where it rolled over on back and was seen to crash into ground and burst into flames.'

Two crew were wounded but the pilot was killed.

Later that same night the first Do 217 nocturnal losses occurred. Thirty-seven Do 217s from I. and II./KG 2 took part in an attack on Grimsby, again dropping SD2 bombs, from which *Lt.* Hans Saliger of 4./KG 2 failed to return. The only claim was filed by Canadian Sqn Ldr Arthur Lawrence DFC of 410 Sqn who, with his RAF Nav/Rad Flt Sgt Harry Wilmer, shot a Do 217 into the sea 10 miles east of the mouth of the Humber. The following night Hull was the target by 52 Do 217s from I. and II./KG 2. At least five aircraft returned due to technical problems but three others were destroyed both over the North Sea and Holland. *Uffz.* Willy Speilmanns of 3./KG 2 failed to return, probably shot down by WO Donald Ray of 604 Sqn whose victim was '... diving vertically in flames. E/a last seen by Observer diving into cloud with starboard engine and mainplane a mass of flames 10 miles east of Scarborough at 0123 hrs.' Then the Do 217 M-1 flown by *Stfw.* Erwin Wolk of 3./KG 2 apparently collided with a nightfighter, which killed the *Bordfunker*, but the aircraft landed at Waalhaven in Holland; and *Fw.* Detlef Krüger of 4./KG 2 crashed on landing at Soesterberg, killing him and his crew. Finally the Do 217 M-1 flown by *Uffz.* Hauck of 2./KG 2 was attacked by a nightfighter and the crew were forced to bail out near Eindhoven at 0305 hrs. This matches well with the attack made by Fg Off Rae Smart and Fg Off John Sutcliffe of 605 Sqn for a Do 217 at Eindhoven at 0254 hrs:

> 'At 0251 hrs a second e/a was seen in the circuit and we gave chase down wind. At 0253 hrs I found that I had overshot slightly and recognised the e/a which was above me as a Do 217 and throttling back positioned myself astern 150 yds away and at 0254 hrs fired a one-second burst of cannon and MG. The e/a returned fire from its dorsal turret but we saw our bullets strike along the fuselage and on the starboard engine which burst into flame. We were at 1,500 ft when I attacked and as the engine caught fire my observer maintains that he saw two parachutes bail out of the e/a. Immediately after attacking we broke away to starboard and the e/a which had made a diving turn to port crashed and burst into flames approximately four miles north-east of the runway at 0255 hrs.'

The Luftwaffe reported that the bomber crashed at Nuenen which matches the location given by the RAF crew – just the *Beobachter* and gunner were injured.

Mining the Humber on the night of 24 July 1943 resulted in the next two losses. There were no claims by nightfighters so why *Uffz.* Otto Gürlich of 2./KG 2 and *Uffz.* Kurt Pfeifer of 5./KG 2 failed to return cannot be said for certain. However, for the losses in the attack on Hull, 604 Sqn had much success. Fg Off Brian Keele and Nav/Rad Fg Off George Cowles claimed the destruction of two Do 217s, one of which was seen well alight and headed towards the sea; the other was seen to hit the sea

and explode. Sqn Ldr Willum Hoy with WO Edgar Le Conte got another, which burst into flames and disintegrated, while Wg Cdr Michael Constable-Maxwell with Fg Off Eric Nordberg claimed a Do 217 damaged:

> 'Closed in on very slow target. Visual on Do 217 at about 2,500 ft, e/a going very slowly and chased for about 10 minutes at about 100 IAS and could not climb up to e/a which was dead above our aircraft. Did quick orbit to port contact again at 2½ miles. E/a now going faster and taking evasive action. At full throttle our aircraft dropped back then closed to 900 ft and opened fire. Strikes seen on starboard side and e/a went straight down. CHL reports that plot on e/a disappeared.'

Three Do 217s were lost during the attack. *Uffz.* Hans-Ulrich Colve's Do 217 E-4 of 5./KG 2 was hit by Flak and crashed at Long Riston in Yorkshire killing all of the crew, while the Do 217 M-1 of *Uffz.* Robert Fuchs of 2./KG 2 must have come down in the North Sea as, during the morning of 26 July 1943, the body of gunner *Uffz.* Hubert Toeltsch was found floating 19 miles east of Spurn Head. The final loss was a pathfinder aircraft of *Stab.*/KG 2 flown by *Uffz.* Max Reuthe, formerly of 6./KG 40, who had transferred with his crew to KG 2 towards the end of March 1943 and was now on his 29th operational flight. Together with another aircraft from *Stab.*/KG 2, flown by *Hptm.* Kurt Seyfarth, the target had been the Victoria Docks at Hull. He had dropped his four 500-kg and four 50-kg incendiary bombs and was headed for home, but as they crossed the coast they realised that they were being stalked by a nightfighter, its presence being clearly confirmed by *Lichtenstein*. This went on for ten minutes before they were attacked and one of the engines was hit. Reuthe ordered the crew to bail out and 24 hours later, *Uffz.* Siegfried Ludwig (observer) and *Uffz.* Willi Schürlein (gunner), were picked up five miles apart, sitting in one-man dinghies, 64 miles east-north-east of Spurn Head. The bodies of Max Reuthe and *Bordfunker Uffz.* Heinrich Böning were never found; it seems likely that they had been shot down by Wg Cdr Mike Constable-Maxwell.

The losses did not end there that night. *Lt.* Manfred Lieddert of 3./KG 2 fell victim to an intruder when landing back at Soesterberg at 0120 hrs. This matches with the claim by Flt Lt Clive Knowles and Fg Off Alan Eagling of 605 Sqn, the former Army officer claiming his first victory of the war, a Do 217 at Soesterberg at 0230 hrs:

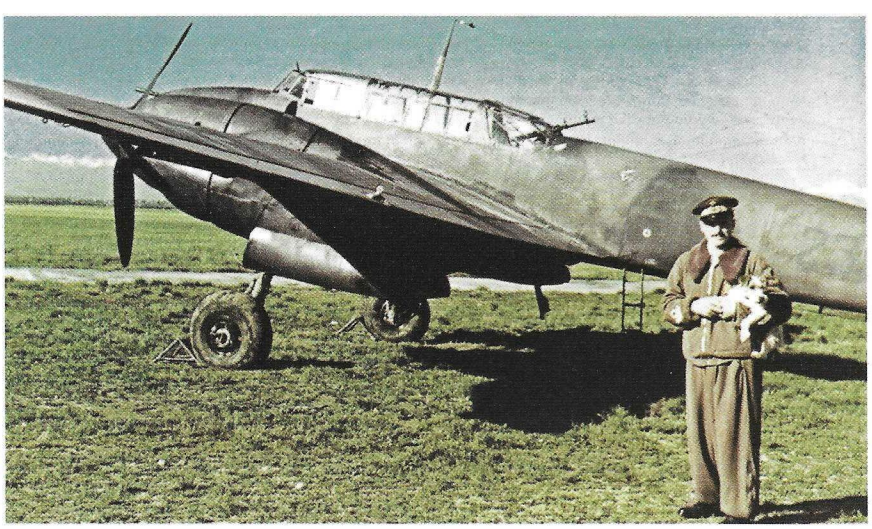
> 'Two e/a were seen making their approach from the north, burning red/white recognition lights. The hind one doused his lights shortly after so we dived on the first and I gave it a three-second burst of cannon and MG from 350 yds closing from astern and above at 1,500 ft. We saw strikes on the port engine and fuselage which burst into flames. In the light of it we recognised it as a Do 217 and we saw the hood jettison. We broke away and saw the e/a crash to the east of the aerodrome.'

Lieddert and two crew were killed but *Beobachter, Gefr.* Toni Herschung, survived albeit wounded. It had been a particularly bloody month for I. and II./KG 2 but August 1943 would see the return of III./KG 2 to the order of battle, only for II./KG 2 to start converting to the Ju 188 at the end of the following month.

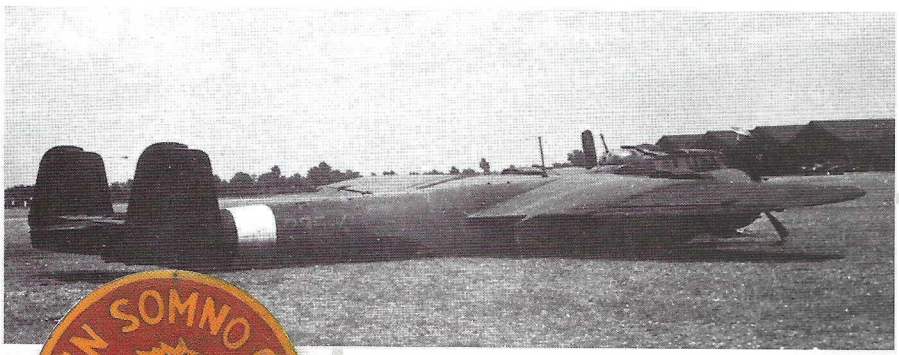
Meanwhile, in the Mediterranean, II. and III./KG 100 were preparing for operations. On 5 July 1943 the first Do 217 E-5s from *Hptm.* Franz Hollweck's II./KG 100 had moved to Istres in southern France for Hs 293 operations, but soon after moved to Cognac on France's Atlantic coast. A week later, Do 217 K-2s from *Hptm.* Bernhard Jope's III./KG 100 moved to Istres for PC 1400X/*Fritz* X operations. A *Kette* then moved to Foggia on 17 July 1943, after which there was an ineffective attack on Allied shipping in Augusta Harbour on Sicily on the evening of 21 July 1943. Successes for both units would finally come in two months' time.

Losses in combat of Do 217 nightfighters had been very rare until the night of 15 July 1943 when two would be lost from 5./NJG 4. *Fw.* Helmut Späte had just shot down his first aircraft of the war, a Halifax of 10 Sqn flown by Sgt Harry Mellor, when his Do 217 N-1 was hit by return fire while attacking a second aircraft and he then crashed at Voisin. Späte and one crew-member were killed. The second loss was more spectacular when *Uffz.* Heinrich Prinz apparently collided with another 10 Sqn Halifax flown by Flt Sgt Bill Pyle. The Halifax crashed into Besançon railway station, killing all of the crew, while the Do 217 N-1 crashed at La Barre, its three crew also killed.

July 1943 would see the swansong of the Do 217 being operated as a nightfighter by the Italians. 41° *Stormo* disbanded on 1 July 1943 and 59° and 60° *Gruppo* (the former defending Turin, the latter Milan) and became independent units, but not for long. In all of its time operating over Italy, only one victory was recorded by an Italian Do 217 when, on the night of 16 July 1943, *Capt.* Aramis Ammanato, the commander of 235a *Squadriglia* 60° *Gruppo* 41° *Stormo Intercettori*, shot down a Lancaster near Vigevano, south-west of Milan – probably an aircraft of 207 Sqn and flown by Plt Off Len Stubbs, which was shot down while attacking a hydroelectric plant at Cislago. By the end of that month, the Italians reported that of the 11 aircraft, six were unserviceable and, due to a lack of spares, the last known sortie was flown on 16 August 1943, after which the unit began converting to the Reggiane 2001 single-seat fighter. At the same time, 233° *Squadrigilia* handed its Do 217s to the 235° *Squadriglia*. At the time of the Armistice on 8 September 1943, just eight Do 217s were recorded – of which only two were operational – three Do 217s having already been written off in accidents. The Germans captured the aircraft at Lonnate Pozzolo airport after the Armistice and their eventual fate is not known.



Capt. Aramis Ammanato, commanding officer of the Italian Do 217 nightfighter unit. (via Apostolo)



Photographs of Capt. Ammanato's crash-landing, 1943. (Guiseppe Grande via Bussi)

Unit badge of 235a Squadriglia, the sole Italian Do 217 nightfighter unit. (via Bussi)

The first two weeks of August 1943 were quiet for the Do 217 *Gruppen*. III./KG 2, now commanded by *Hptm.* Albert Schreiweis (formerly of 9.*Staffel*), returned from its sojourn at Coulommiers to Gilze-Rijen on 10 August 1943, after which it was ready to take part in the first major attack of the month against Portsmouth. It had moved from Gilze-Rijen to Dreux, the other *Gruppe* moving to St Andrew and Beauvais on 15 August in readiness for an attack that night. It would be a rude wake-up call for III.*Gruppe* in that things had changed for the worse while they had been training.

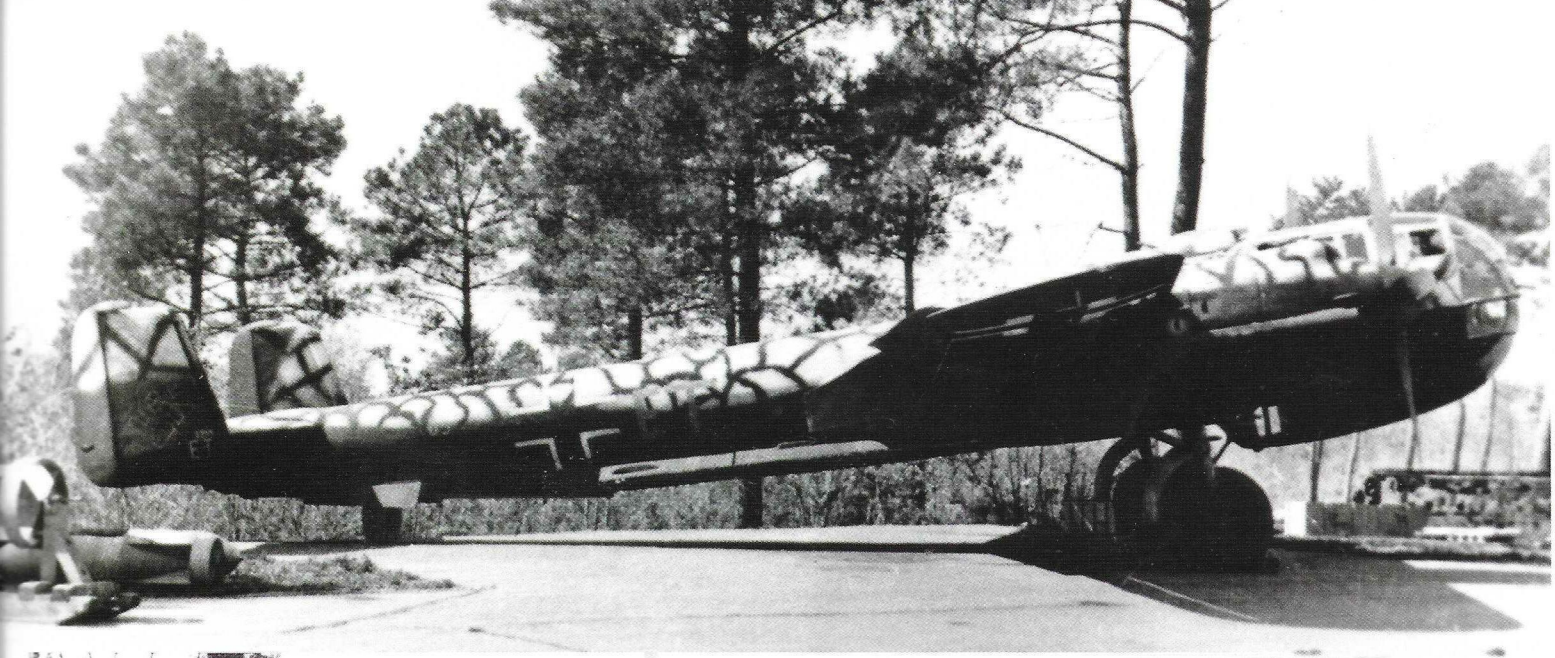
The attack did not get off to a good start. The presence of intruders – two Mosquitos of 410 Sqn and eight Beaufighters from 141 Sqn – delayed take-off. One Beaufighter crewed by Flt Sgt M M 'Robbie' Robertson and Flt Sgt Douggie Gillam was shot down in uncertain circumstances at Flamanville near Yvetot, where both crew were captured. The Luftwaffe stated that 71 Do 217s took part with 20 Me 410s of V./KG 2 taking off for Portsmouth afterwards. The first aircraft was detected 35 miles south of Bournemouth flying east at 1,000 ft. It was chased by Fg Off Cliff Bryan of 256 Sqn and, despite it jinking violently, was claimed shot down five miles off the French coast, with Bryan thinking that his victim was an Me 410 even though none had been lost that night. At the same time, Fg Off Rayne Schultz of 410 Sqn, returning from an intruder patrol over France, claimed a Do 217 destroyed 17 miles south of Beachy Head; the crew were seen to bail out before the aircraft hit the sea and exploded. The next phase saw 35 aircraft approaching Portsmouth from the east and north, of which just 25 crossed the coast between Beachy Head and the Isle of Wight, the first aircraft crossing the coast at Worthing at 2356 hrs. The first claim was by Wg Cdr Geoff Park of 256 Sqn for a Do 217 destroyed 40 miles south of Ford; he would then go on to claim another two off the coast that night, his aircraft being damaged in the nose by return fire and his Nav/Rad, Flt Lt George Cooke, slightly wounded in the right hand by splinters. The final claims of the night went to Flt Sgt Bill Brearley of 256 Sqn for a Do 217 damaged near Chichester at 0023 hrs and another one probably destroyed half a mile off the coast at Selsey eighteen minutes later. The final phase consisted of six aircraft, probably from V./KG 2, which crossed the coast near Selsey between 0017 and 0135 hrs. They dropped their bombs and headed back out to sea. The same RAF intruders that had caused problems at take-off were still causing problems on the return – one crew on approaching Dreux were told to divert immediately to St André, where they landed safely.

At least 42 civilians were killed in and around Portsmouth that night but the raid was not as successful as the Germans would have hoped:

> 'A small-scale attack was made on Portsmouth lasting from midnight to 0100 hrs on the 16th. A relatively small number of HE UXBs, phosphorous and oil bombs and numerous incendiaries were dropped mainly on the east side of the city. Damage was principally to residential property, approximately 550 houses were seriously damaged and about 1,600 were damaged to a lesser degree. Nearly 40 fires were under control by 0200 hrs. No damage of consequence has been reported to essential utility services.'

That said, an HE bomb caused damage in the Royal Navy Dockyard while another caused damage to the aircraft manufacturer Airspeed Ltd at Portsmouth Airport; superficial damage was caused to the factory and one aircraft was burnt out on the production line. Damage was also caused to the railway line between Fratton and Farlington.

As well as the nightfighter claims, the Portsmouth AA defences claimed to have destroyed two and damaged one German bomber. Losses by KG 2 that night were one aircraft each from I. and II./KG 2. Of these, the bodies of *Uffz.* Karl Morgenstern and his *Beobachter*, from 1./KG 2, were found in the sea off Beachy Head and Worthing



Above: Do 217 M-1, W.Nr. 722852, U5+ET, of 9./KG 2 in the summer of 1943. On the night of 15 August 1943, this aircraft crashed north of Portsmouth killing Lt. Theo Bach and his crew.

The smashed remains of Do 217 M-1, W.Nr. 722852, U5+ET, of 9./KG 2 at Lovedean in Hampshire. Lt. Bach tried to dive away from a searchlight but hit the ground at high speed.

respectively, indicating that they were probably shot down by Rayne Schultz of 410 Sqn who saw the crew bail out. However, III./KG 2 suffered badly with three aircraft lost during the attack and two crashing on their return near Evreux. A further aircraft, flown by *Hptm.* Albert Schreiweis, had an engine stopped by Flak and then crash-landed in a cornfield near Evreux which injured all four crew. Just one Do 217 crashed on mainland Britain in unusual circumstances. Approaching the south coast at 10,000 ft, it was held by searchlights for about five minutes, during which time the pilot, *Lt.*Theo Bach of 9./KG 2, commenced violent evasive action which included a dive to 500 ft. He then continued at the same height but, still held by searchlights, dived again, only to hit the ground at Lovedean, north-east of Portsmouth, at 0010 hrs – the aircraft and its crew disintegrating over the fields. The only personal items that were recovered were an *Ausweis*, an identity disc, and an *Unteroffizier's* collar patch, and the only remains buried at RAF Thorney Island were those of the *Bordmechaniker*, *Ogefr.* Werner Neubert. This aircraft, W.Nr. 722852, was the first Do 217 M-1 to crash on land but its smashed condition revealed few secrets.

If this attack was bad enough for the Do 217 crews, the attack on Lincoln on the night of 17 August 1943 was even worse. This raid saw the first Do 217 combat loss for the pathfinder unit KG 66 when a Do 217 E-4 flown by *Ofw.* Ernst Stemplinger of 1.*Staffel* failed to return. This contributed to the bomber crews' lack of success in finding the target while a diversionary attack on Colchester by Me 410s of V./KG 2 and Fw 190s of I./SKG 10 did not stop the RAF nightfighters from creating mayhem, with 68 Sqn claiming the destruction of three Do 217s and another probably destroyed, and 604 Sqn claiming to have destroyed two more and probably destroying another two. The attack cost KG 2 seven aircraft, all but one of them crashing in the sea, with the deaths of another 24 aircrew and five captured. Another three aircraft were damaged with nine aircrew injured or wounded.

The only aircraft to crash on land was from 7./KG 2; it was flown by *Fw.* Rudi Hölz. The crew were all captured and their interrogation gave the RAF an idea of what had happened to them that night:

> 'About 15 aircraft from III./KG 2 – of which five came from 7.*Staffel* – took part in this operation. This represented a maximum effort. POWs had been told that some aircraft from V./KG 2 and of I./SKG 10 were to operate on the same night on a diversionary attack on Colchester. This aircraft took off from Gilze-Rijen at about 2300 hrs with four 500 kg Trialen bombs and four AB36 containers of incendiaries. The pilot followed the pre-flight plan until he was nearing the coast at a height of 10-13,000 ft. When about 30-40 km from the English coast, he began to take evasive action and shortly afterwards Flak was observed which the crew believed came from a convoy. When the aircraft crossed the coast at 13,000 ft it was picked up for a short time by one of a considerable number of searchlights and intense Flak was encountered. Soon after the coast had been crossed and while the crew were looking out for flares and incendiaries which were to mark the target, some trouble was experienced with the starboard engine – caused, it was thought, by Flak. At the same time, a glare was seen in the distance and although the pilot was of the opinion

that they should jettison their bombs and turn for home, the Observer [*Lt.* Friedrich-Wilhelm Guse] insisted on making course for what he thought to be the target-marking incendiaries. Almost immediately, the oil temperature of the starboard engine rose, the boost fell and the engine caught fire. The bombs were jettisoned and orders given to bail out from a height of 11,000 ft. The destructive charge of the *Lichtenstein Gerät* was operated before the crew left the aircraft.'

Their Do 217 M-1 crashed in flames at Irby-on-Humber, scattering the wreckage over a wide area; the main wreckage was still burning 36 hours later. The crew could not agree why the engine was on fire – the pilot thought it was due to a nightfighter; the remaining three thought it was Flak. However, there is one RAF combat report that possibly provides the answer.

At 2343 hrs, Flt Sgt Jack Wilkinson and his Nav/Rad Flt Sgt Peter Catchpole of 604 Sqn had claimed the destruction of a Do 217 20 miles north-east of Skegness which went down with its port engine on fire. Then at 0005 hrs, he attacked a second Do 217, 5-7 miles east of Mablethorpe:

'Fighter was unable to close in any further so pilot gave a long burst of cannon and MG. He told operator over the intercom that he had seen strikes on the starboard engine and he called up controller and said, "I have got another one, he has gone right below me and all I can see now is a red glow."'

The time of the crash of the Do 217 at Irby-on-Humber and the location of the combat would indicate that the 7./KG 2 aircraft was shot down by a nightfighter. However, the night would have a spectacular ending for the 604 Sqn crew:

'Fighter then set course for base as pilot apparently thought he was out of ammunition but actually was not. Just as fighter turned into the funnels at 800 ft, operator noticed clouds of white smoke coming from port engine; he informed the pilot but at the same moment there was a loud bang and the port engine cut. The a/c appeared to go out of control then the pilot regained control, retracted his undercarriage and tried to force-land on the aerodrome. He then called over the intercom that he didn't think he could make it and a/c crash-landed on its belly 150 yds off the west end of the east-west runway at Scorton.'

Both crew were badly injured and the cause for the crash was not enemy action – it was thought that Jack Wilkinson had forgotten to switch over his fuel tanks after the excitement of the combat!

Gefr. Gerhard Arlt from 2./KG 2, who was taken prisoner of war, revealed more about that night. His pilot, *Lt.* Ortwin Rösner, got their Do 217 airborne from Eindhoven at 2300 hrs, but on approaching the English coast Arlt spotted a nightfighter – possibly flown by Flt Sgt Jim Peters of 68 Sqn – closing in from astern and below. The British side of the combat read as follows:

'Flt Sgt Peters closed to 800 ft and fired a six-second burst. Strikes were seen and the e/a pulled up giving the pilot a plan view and then went out of control in a spin to starboard.'

Arlt managed to shout a warning to the pilot who immediately took violent evasive action, turning to port and then appearing to lose control of the aircraft. The order to bail out was then given. By then, *Uffz.* Wilhelm Schneider, the *Bordfunker*, had already gone; his body was never found. Gerhard Arlt was luckier. As to the aircraft, Rösner regained control and landed at Eindhoven minus two crew-members.

Bombs were scattered all over Lincolnshire and Suffolk with no major damage caused. No further Do 217s were lost in combat by KG 2 or I./KG 66 for the remainder of the month, attacks by the Me 410s of V./KG 2 now being preferred.

Meanwhile in the Bay of Biscay, August 1943 would be notable for the first successful attack by II./KG 100 using Hs 293s. On 25 August 1943, twelve Do 217 E-5s operating out of Cognac and apparently led by *Geschwaderkommodore Maj.* Fritz Aufhammer and escorted by seven Ju 88 C-6s from V./KG 40, attacked a convoy off Cap Ortegal, damaging the warships HMS *Bideford, Waveney* and *Landguard*. The only loss of life was Able Seaman Charles Boardman on the *Bideford*, even though the Hs 293 that hit the ship failed to explode. Ofw Karl Ballermann of 6./KG 100 recorded getting airborne from Cognac at 1207 hrs and landing at 1716 hrs and that his Hs 293 had malfunctioned. The following day, 15./KG 40 went looking for more targets for II./KG 100 and, having discovered six warships from the First Support Group, at 1415 hrs on 27 August 1943 fourteen Do 217s – together with their escort – approached the warships which were 30 nautical miles west of Vigo. Dividing into three groups, seven Hs 293s were aimed at the sloop HMS *Egret* commanded by Lt Cdr John Waterhouse. One bomb was shot down, five fell short, but the last one hit the ship's munitions stores, after which the warship exploded. A total of 194 crew plus four RAF personnel who were monitoring German aircraft radio traffic were killed, but 35 were rescued by the destroyer HMCS *Athabaskan* commanded by Cdr George Miles which now came under attack and was damaged, with three of its crew killed. The sinking of the *Egret* was credited to *Maj.* Aufhammer and *Oblt.* Otto Paulus, while the damage to *Athabaskan* was credited to *Hptm.* Wolfgang Vorpahl of 5./KG 100. As a result of these attacks, anti-U-boat operations in the Bay of Biscay were temporarily suspended.

Although II./KG 100 suffered no losses in the two attacks, the same month III./KG 100 lost Do 217 K-2s from 8.*Staffel*, flown by *Lt.* Robert Bürkle, and 9.*Staffel*, flown by *Uffz.* Silvio Schenck, while attacking Palermo on 1 August 1943. Another from *Stab* III./KG 100, flown by *Lt.* Hans-Joachim Zantopp, was shot down by a Beaufighter of 108 Sqn flown by Plt Off Bill Henderson, 30 km north of Milazzo on 10 August 1943. Zantopp and one crew-member were picked up later in the day by a Walrus of 283 Sqn crewed by Sgt Arnold Divers and Flt Sgt Tony Moribato. Zantopp's interrogation revealed that his Do 217 K was carrying 'special equipment', namely a 1,400-kg remotely-controlled bomb and that III./KG 100 had flown three such missions – attacks on shipping at Augusta, Bizerta and Palermo – before Zantopp was shot down. Further interrogation gave the Allies more vital information:

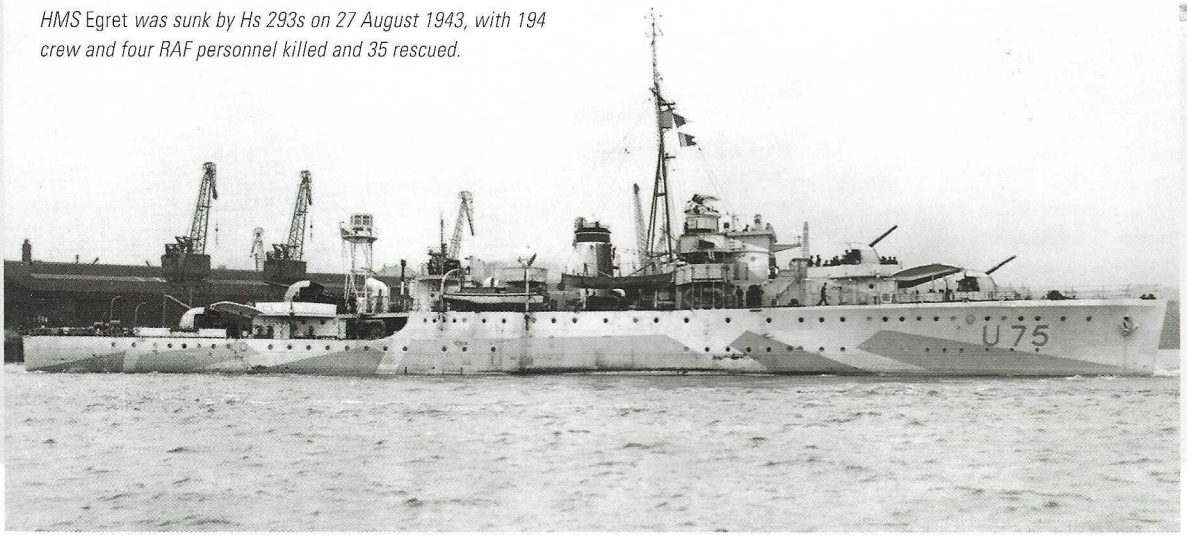
'After the bomb has been released, the pilot decelerates and lifts the nose of the a/c slightly. As soon as the bomb becomes visible, the Observer begins to steer the bomb. In the a/c there is a short-wave transmitter

Photographed from a Ju 88 C-6 of V./KG 40 is believed to be a Do 217 E-5 of II./KG 100.

HMS Bideford *was damaged by Hs 293s on 25 August 1943.*

HMS Waveney *was also damaged by Hs 293s on 25 August.*

HMS Egret *was sunk by Hs 293s on 27 August 1943, with 194 crew and four RAF personnel killed and 35 rescued.*



which is tuned to the same frequency as a receiver on the bomb. By means of a control stick, the Observer can cause a steering mechanism to direct the bomb left or right. In addition the Observer can steepen the trajectory by pushing the stick forward. The *Lotfe* bombsight is used for aiming and to assist the Observer to keep the bomb in his sights; the bomb leaves a coloured trail. The first colour was red but Observer confused the AA shells with the bomb. Green was then used but was equally ineffective for the same reason. Blue is now being used. The a/c has specially lengthened wings to enable the heavy load to be flown at a height of 7000 m and it is interesting to know that III./KG 100 are short of these because the RAF smashed up the factory which makes them at Lübeck.

The bombs are dropped from a height of 7000 m and the time of drop is 42 seconds. They can be dropped from 6000 m when the time of drop is 38 seconds. In each case the impact velocity is 750 kph.'

One final, but crucial piece of information was that for attacks on merchant ships, instantaneous fuses were used; but against capital ships, delayed action fuses were used. This would explain what would take place in a month's time.

Over Britain, September 1943 would be one of the quietest months of bombing since the start of the war. As means of an example, *Uffz.* Jakob Burkhard of 2./KG 2 flew just one minelaying mission on 22 September 1943, while *Oblt.* Josef Steudel – now

Staffelkapitän of 8./KG 2 – flew just two minelaying missions on 3 and 7 September 1943. It would appear that the fear of invasion prompted the switch from bombing to mining this month, bombing being left to V./KG 2 and I./SKG 10. For example, the night of 3 September saw 77 aircraft laying 121 mines off Boulogne and a similar mission was carried out on the night of 6 September 1943.

KG 2 recorded the loss of just two aircraft, both on minelaying operations. The first, flown by *Ofw.* Erich Möseler of 9./KG 2, was shot down by Fg Off Ron Watts of 488 Sqn 30 miles south-east of North Foreland on the night of 15 September 1943. The same night a Do 217 E-4 of 11./KG 2 was shot down on a training flight by Fg Off Kenneth 'Dizzy' Dacre of 605 Sqn at Melun; the bomber crashed 8 km east of Villaroche, killing *Uffz.* Wolfgang Lüdecke and his crew. Dacre and his navigator Sgt Sidney Didsbury would be shot down and killed near Oldenburg just after midnight on 22 September by *Ofw.* Lodega Fleischmann of 7./JG 300 and would be awarded the DFC and DFM respectively, posthumously the following month. The second loss was from 7./KG 2 and occurred at 0105 hrs on 22 September 1943 when the Do 217 K-1 flown by *Uffz.* Helmut Rumpff was picked up by searchlights near Spurn Head flying at 50 ft. The gunners opened fire on the searchlights only for the pilot to hit the ground at a shallow angle and the aircraft broke up, killing all four on board. Two mines were found in the wreckage, one of which exploded shortly after the crash.

September 1943 was a bad month for mid-air collisions. On the night of 3 September, *Hptm.* Albert Schreiweis, *Kommandeur* of III./KG 2, who was recently recovered from his injuries following the crash-landing on 16 August 1943, collided with a Bf 110 G-4 of 1./NJG 1 flown by *Uffz.* Heinrich Kölling on landing at Gilze-Rijen. Kölling's *Bordfunker* bailed out uninjured, but the pilot was killed, while Schreiweis was injured and his Do 217 M-1 seriously damaged. Then, on 22 September 1943, two Do 217 M-1s of 7./KG 2 flown by *Lt.* Josef Rohmfeld and *Uffz.* Herbert Rose, collided during operations over the North Sea; all eight crew-members were reported missing.

There would still be the inevitable accidents throughout the month, which resulted in three more aircraft being seriously damaged or destroyed with five aircrew killed and seven injured. *Oblt.* Karl-Günther Nader and *Ofw.* Lothar Küll, both *Deutsches Kreuz in Gold* winners with 5./KG 2, were also killed in an accident on 4 September 1943 – they had converted to the Me 410 and Näder was commanding 16./KG 2 when their aircraft suffered engine failure and crashed near Zeist in Holland. Näder would be promoted to *Hptm.* posthumously.

Meanwhile, in the Mediterranean, things were much busier following the Allied landings at Salerno, which began on 3 September, and the Italian surrender on 8 September 1943. The surrender was fortuitous for the Allies as the principal warships of the Italian navy should have been attacking the landings. Instead, on 9 September 1943, the fleet – which included the battleships *Roma*, *Vittoria Veneto* and *Italia* – set sail from La Spezia to prevent the 17 ships from falling into German hands. When the Italian intentions became known, the Luftwaffe sent III./KG 100 to attack them with *Fritz* X bombs.

So far this month, just one Do 217 K-2 had been lost. This was from *Stab* III/KG 100, flown by *Fw.* Karl Schwartz on 5 September 1943 and shot down by Flt Lt Bill Maguire of 154 Sqn off Cap Vaticano. Now III./KG 100 shadowed the fleet until they reached the Straits of Bonifacio when 11 aircraft attacked at 1537 hrs. The first attack was launched by *Maj.* Bernhard Jope whose observer, *Uffz.* Lori Klapproth, got a near miss which temporarily jammed the *Roma's* rudder. Then at 1537 hrs, another attack led by *Oblt.* Heinrich Schmetz saw *Uffz.* Heinrich Penz – observer to *Lt.* Klaus Deumling of 7./KG 100 (who was on his first mission) – hit the *Roma* on the starboard side. Photographic evidence exists of the attack by *Uffz.* Eugen Degan, the observer in *Ofw.* Kurt Steinborn's Do 217 K-1 of 7./KG 100, who reported hitting the *Roma* on the starboard side. At the same time the *Roma's* sister ship, the *Italia*, was attacked. The second hit on the *Roma* passed through the ship and exploded under the keel. Water now flooded the engine and boiler rooms and a large number of electrical fires broke out. Losing speed, the *Roma* began lagging behind and at 1602 hrs, another *Fritz* X from a second wave of seven Do 217s detonated in the forward engine room. More flames and flooding ensued, followed by an explosion in one of the turret's magazines. This caused even more flooding, after which the *Roma* began sinking bow first, then capsized and broke in two. It is thought that 593 men survived but at least 1,253 men, including Admiral Carlo Bergamini, commander of the Italian Fleet, and the *Roma's* captain, Capitano Adone de Cima, went down with her. The end of the *Roma* was witnessed by one of the escorting aircraft, a Marauder from 14 Sqn flown by Wg Cdr Hubert Law-Wright, who reported afterwards:

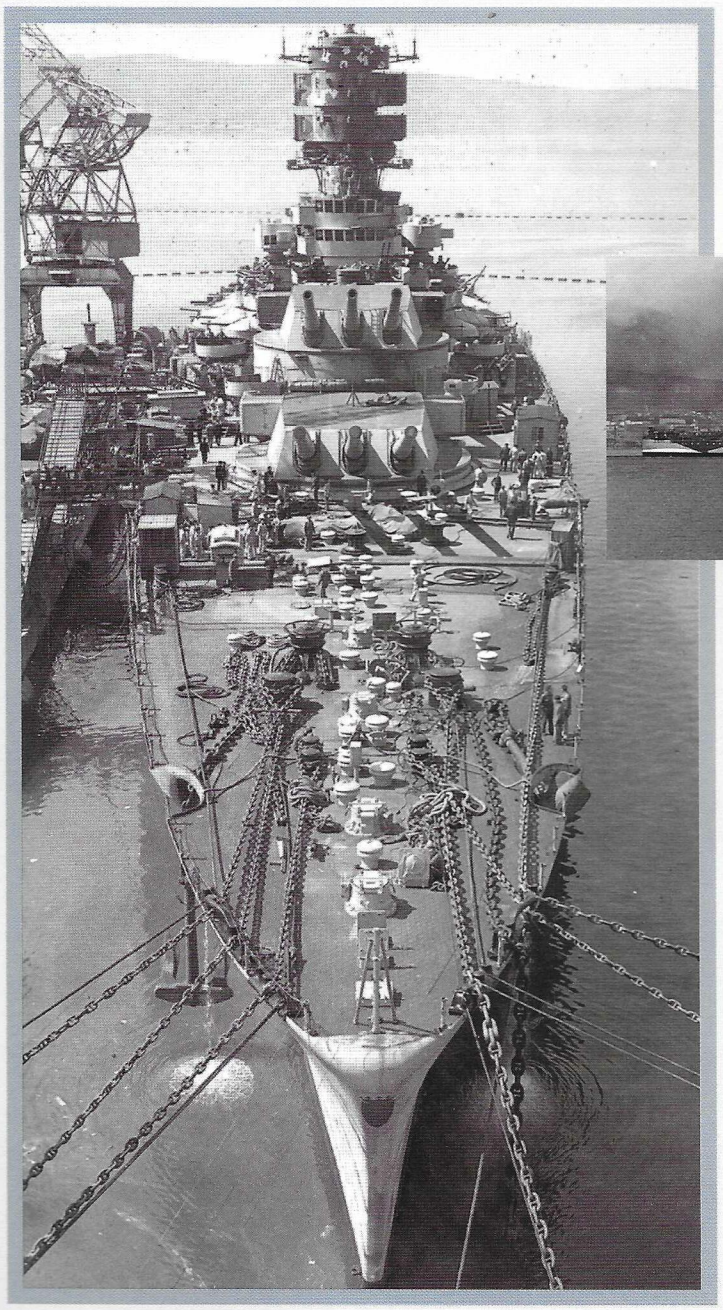
> 'We saw an enormous explosion on one of the battleships. Creamy white smoke went up to about 4,000 ft. The smoke subsided and it looked as if it were getting under way again. We flew over the ships and took a look at the damaged one. We arrived just as it was sinking. Under a big column of smoke we saw the stern under water and the bow sticking up. The ship appeared to break in two and folded up with the control tower and keel forming a V as the ship slowly disappeared.'

The *Italia* was more fortunate – a *Fritz* X hit forward of No.1 turret, passed through the ship and exited the hull, exploding in the water underneath and causing a large leak which let in 1,060 tons of water; but she managed to limp into Malta.

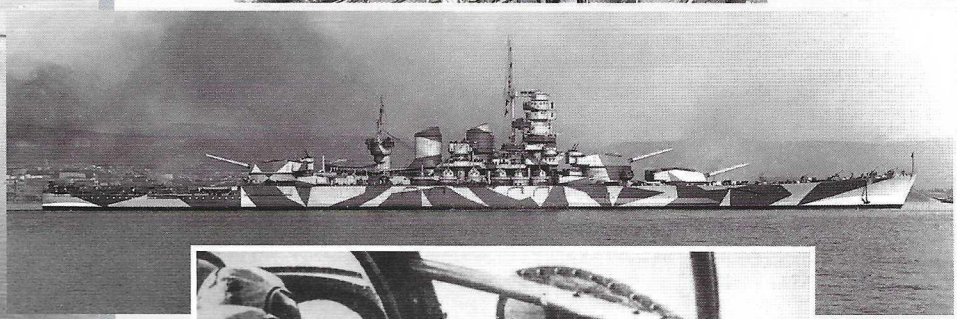
By now II./KG 100 with its Hs 293s joined III./KG 100. The next success came at 1000 hrs on 11 September 1943. A single *Fritz* X passed through the roof of 'C' turret of the USS *Savannah*, killing the turret crew and a damage control party when it exploded in the lower ammunition handling room. The blast tore a large hole in the ship's hull, opened a seam in her side and blew out all fires in her boiler rooms. *Savannah* now lay dead in the water with her forecastle nearly awash, and eight hours elapsed before her boilers were relit for her to get underway for Malta. A total of 197 crew were killed and 15 were seriously wounded. Four more were trapped in a watertight compartment and were not rescued until after the *Savannah* had arrived in Malta on 12 September.

HMS *Uganda* was then hit at 1440 hrs on 13 September 1943, off Salerno, by a bomb which passed through seven decks and straight through the keel, exploding underwater just under her keel. The concussive shock of the underwater detonation extinguished all her boiler fires, and 1,300 tons of water were taken on and sixteen men killed. She too was towed to Malta for repairs. Three aircraft were lost to Spitfires of 81 and 111 Sqn but one, flown by *Oblt.* Erwin Burghoff of *Stab* III./KG 100,

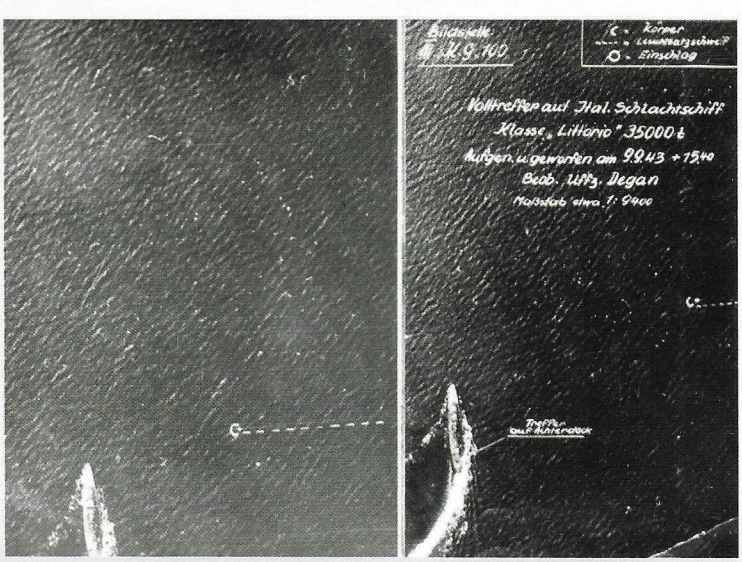
The battleship Vittorio Veneto.



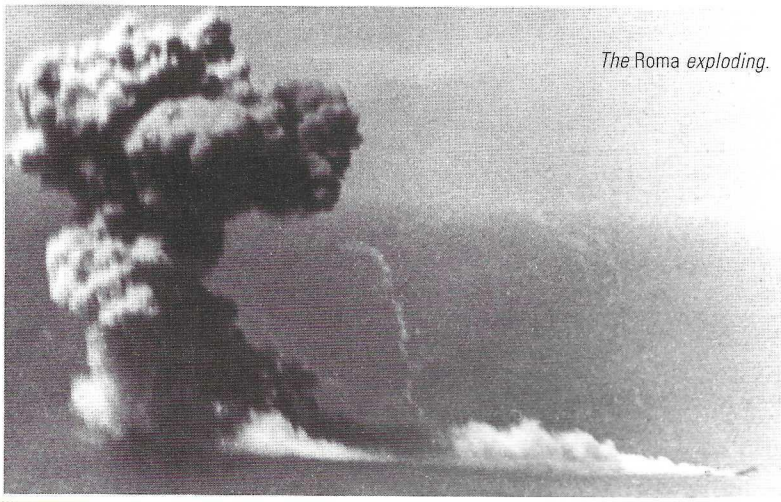
Above and above upper right: Three views of the Italian battleship Roma.



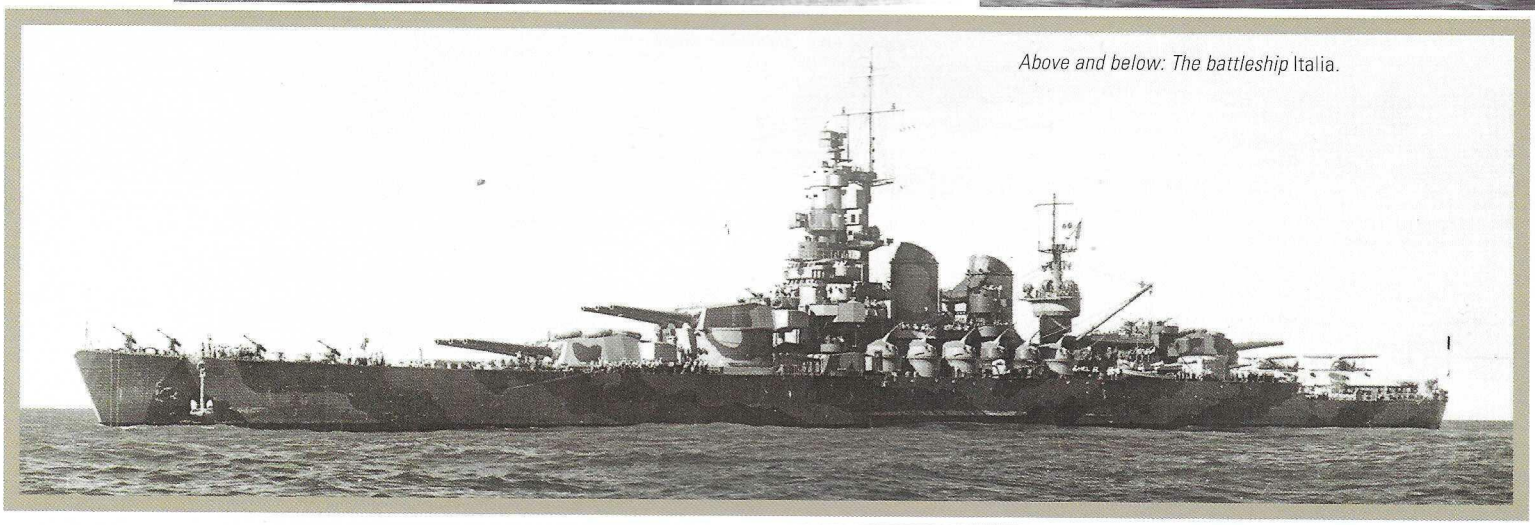
The Beobachter steers an Hs 293/Fritz X to the target.



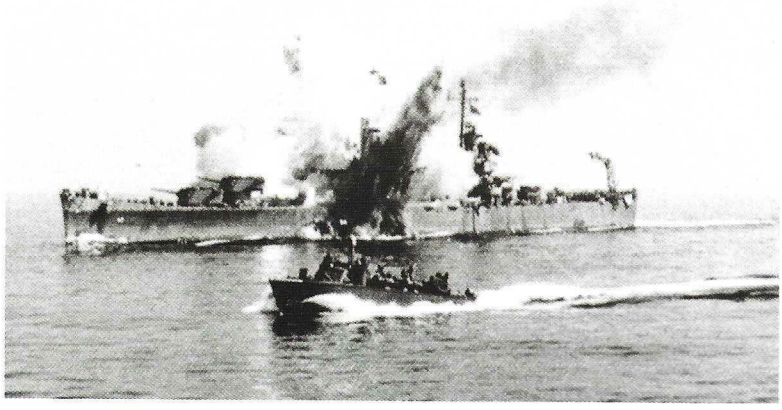
Right: The hit on the Roma.



The Roma *exploding.*



Above and below: The battleship Italia.

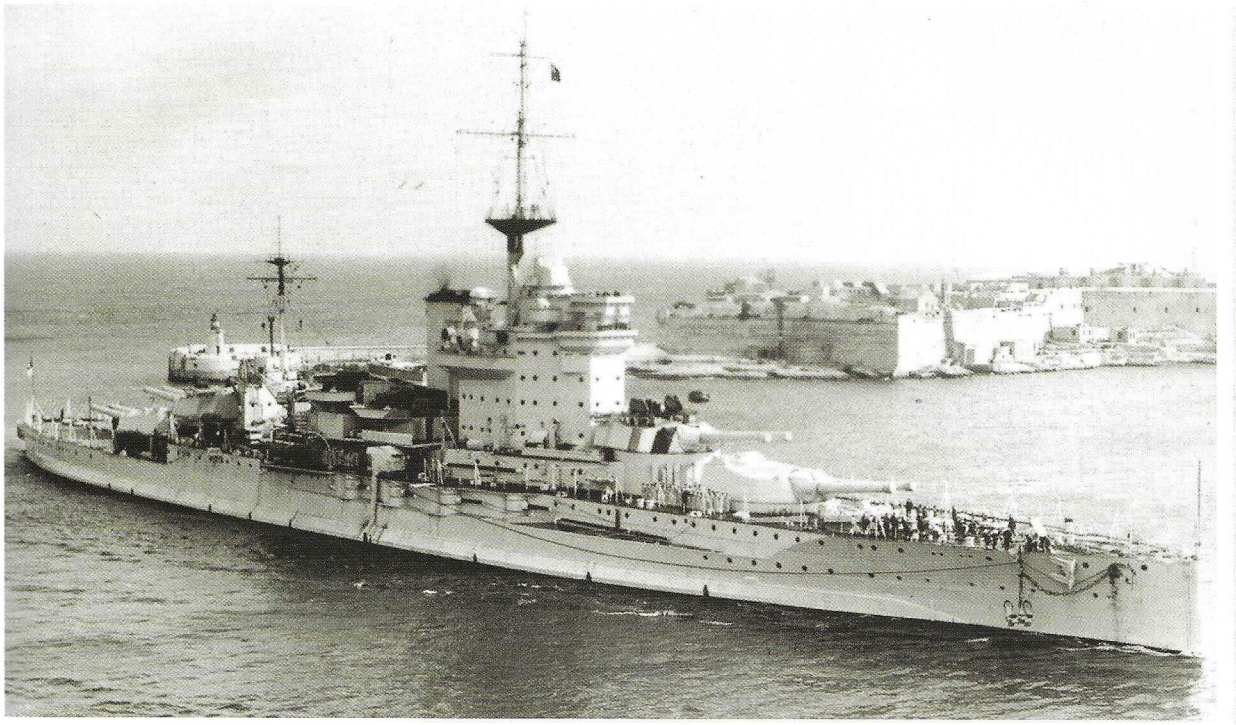


Direct hit on the USS Savannah.

Above right: The hole made by the Fritz X glide-bomb on the USS Savannah.

was badly damaged by a Spitfire which the crew claimed to have shot down before they bailed out over German-held territory. This was probably Plt Off Bill Fell of 81 Sqn who was hit by return fire and forced to bail out over German territory, was captured but managed to escape. Burghoff would soon transfer to the maritime nightfighter unit *Kommando Kunkel* (also known as *Nachtjagd Kommando*/KG 40 and 9.(NJ)./ZG 1) and he would be killed in an accident at Nantes on 21 February 1944.

At least two merchant ships may have been hit by either Hs 293 or *Fritz* Xs at Salerno on 14 September 1943 although the evidence is uncertain. The following day, two Do 217s from III./KG 100 attacked shipping off Salerno, with one of them claiming to have sunk an 8,000-ton freighter with a single *Fritz* X. Then on 16 September, III./KG 100 achieved an almost spectacular success with *Fritz* X while the British battleship HMS *Warspite* was providing gunfire support at Salerno. One bomb penetrated six decks before exploding in No. 4 boiler room. The explosion put out all fires and blew out the double bottom. A second *Fritz* X near-missed *Warspite*, holing her at the waterline and she took on a total of 5,000 tonnes of water and lost steam (and consequently all power). The first hit was by a missile launched from the Do 217 K-2 flown by *Oblt.* Heinrich Schmetz of 9./KG 100, his observer being *Uffz.* Oskar Huhn; and another two hits with the responsible observers being *Fw.* Meyer and *Ogefr.* Mrzowitzki. Although the damage had been considerable, *Warspite's* casualties amounted to only nine killed and fourteen wounded. She was towed to Malta then returned to Britain via Gibraltar and was out of action for nearly nine months. A survivor of the Battle



HMS Warspite *enters Grand Harbour in Malta.*

of Jutland in the First World War, she was never completely repaired but returned to action to bombard German positions in Normandy on 6 June 1944.

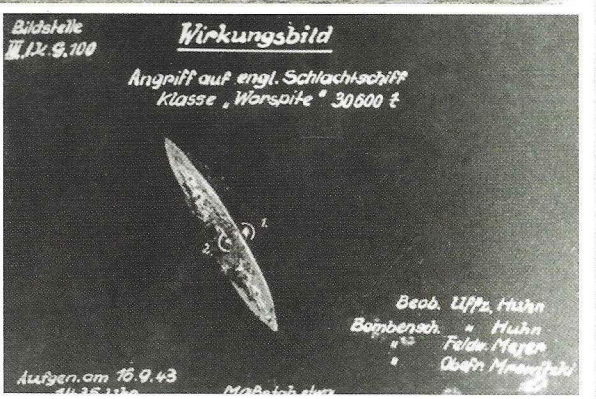
The last *Fritz* X attack at Salerno lightly damaged the light cruiser USS *Philadelphia* with two near misses on 17 September 1943; the same day III./KG 100 flew its last major *Fritz* X mission over Salerno. Ten Do 217s were lost by II. and III./KG 100 between 13 and 17 September 1943 – seven Do 217 E-5s and three K-2s. Reported missing on 19 September 1943 was *Uffz.* Eugen Degan of 7./KG 100, one of the successful *Beobachters* from the attack on the *Roma* and *Italia*. Flying with *Lt.* Karl-Ernst Michelis, he was probably shot down by Flt Lt Roy Hussey of 72 Sqn in the Ascerno/Cipriano area.

More losses for II./KG 100 occurred on 30 September 1943 while attacking ships landing troops and supplies at Ajaccio, Corsica. Ten Do 217 E-5s led by *Hptm.* Heinz Molinnus, who had recently taken over from *Maj.* Franz Hollweck as *Gruppenkommandeur* of II./KG 100, attacked with Hs 293s, damaging the French destroyer *Le Fortuné* killing one sailor, and sinking landing ship LST 79 which was carrying LCT 2231. Spitfires of *Groupe de Chasse* (GC) 2/7 were scrambled to intercept, the French pilots reporting that the tight formation of 10 aircraft scattered as they approached. Lt. Henri Jeandet reported what happened next:

> 'I was behind them but was closing at full speed, hoping to catch the last before he could drop bombs over the port. To my great amazement, the three bombers dropped "lighted objects" that accelerated and dived on the port after flying horizontally for some hundreds of meters.'

Colonel Davis D Graves, Commanding Officer of the 63rd Fighter Wing on board LST 79, wrote:

> 'I was in the landing ship and watched the bomb all during its flight. A Do 217 at around 9,000 ft flew across the port at 5 km in the south. I then saw a black trail behind the bomber, and then flames when the bomb was dropped. The bomb appeared to be as a round object going towards the target and remaining in the same line as the bomber that flew a path perpendicular to its track. The bomb flew a parabolic curve and I saw it diving at a more acute angle in the last instants to score a direct hit on the landing ship. The rear part of the bomb was throwing flames and she seemed to seek its impact point, as a bomber in flames with its bombs. The landing ship immediately burned, oil in the water was burning with flames up to 10 m high. Some men were killed. The two



German view of the hits on HMS Warspite.

A crew-member bails out of a Do 217 shot down by Flt Lt Roy Hussey of 72 Sqn in the Ascerno/Cipriano region of Italy, 19 September 1943. This is possibly the Do 217 K-2 of 7./KG 100 flown by Lt. Karl-Ernst Michelis.

first bombs dropped by two other aircraft hit the same spot of the quay, 5 m from the French destroyer.'

Five Royal Navy and at least seven RAF personnel from 8001 and 8003 Air Ministry Experimental Station (mobile radar units) were killed on LST 79. The three Do 217 losses, plus a Ju 88 D-1 of 1.(F)/33 flown by *Uffz.* Baldur Umlauf, were attributed to GC 2/7, with four aircraft claimed by S/Lt Georges Valentin and Capt Serge Bouton, two shared between Adj Jean Doudiès, Cdt Horau De La Source and Lt Henri Jeandet (who accounted for the Ju 88 which crashed on land at Villanova 8 km north-west of Ajaccio killing all the crew) and, finally, Capt Gabriel Gauthier. However, records do contradict which pilots made claims. A Do 217 E-5 of 5./KG 100 flown by *Uffz.* Ernst Bachmann managed to return with a damaged bomber with all four crew wounded. Those that crashed off Corsica were from 6./KG 100. *Lt.* Joachim Baumert and two crew were killed and two captured, while *Uffz.* Rudi Ruhland and two crew were killed, one being the *Beobachter*, *Oblt.* Friedrich Wolf, who was leading 6.*Staffel* following the death of *Oblt.* Walter Seifert on 27 September 1943. Another crew-member was captured. Baumert was carrying an additional crew-member, signals officer *Lt.* Hagen Donat, commanding officer of 7./*Luftnachrichten Regt ObdL*, who was apparently there to monitor and jam Allied radio traffic. Because of this, Baumert's aircraft was believed not to have been carrying an Hs 293. 6./KG 100 claimed to have shot down three Spitfires in this attack, but none were lost.

Both *Gruppen* would remain in southern France until mid-November 1943, losing another four Do 217 E-5s and the first Do 217 K-3 on operations and in accidents. One of those killed was the newly appointed *Kommandeur* of II./KG 100, *Hptm.* Heinz Molinnus, on 4 October 1943; during an attack on a convoy, II./KG 100 was intercepted by P-39s of GC 3/6 with Adj Albert Le Bras and Adj Gabriel Mertzisen shooting down *Oblt.* Wolfgang Böttger of 6./KG 100 off Cap Tenes, Algeria at 1920 hrs. He and three crew were killed, but the *Beobachter* was rescued from his dinghy nearly four hours later. Whether they damaged the aircraft flown by Molinnus is not known for sure but he and his crew were killed when they crashed on landing at Istres. Command of II./KG 100 passed to *Hptm.* Heinz-Emil Middermann, formerly of II./KG 40 and 6./KG 2. Of interest, a crew from 6./KG 100 claimed to have shot down a Spitfire in this attack, while *Ogefr.* Kurt Laufenberg of 4./KG 100 was credited with a Beaufighter 25 minutes later; none were lost. *Ofw.* Karl Ballermann of 6./KG 100 recorded getting airborne from Istres at 1645 hrs, landing again at 2111 hrs and that he had attacked a convoy 20 km north of Cap Tenes; he saw no fighters, just heavy Flak.

In late October 1943, *Hptm.* Wolfgang Vorpahl's 5./KG 100 moved to Kalamaki in Greece where they carried out Hs 293 operations in the Aegean, damaging HMS *Rockwood* and sinking HMS *Dulverton* on 11 and 13 November 1943 respectively. However, on 15 November, eight of the *Staffel's* aircraft were destroyed or damaged in an air attack on Kalamaki, after which they had no alternative but to rejoin II./KG 100 at Toulouse-Blagnac in mid-December 1943.

Meanwhile, back in north-west Europe, changes were afoot. In October 1943 II./KG 2 had begun converting to the Ju 188 E-1 with the remaining two *Gruppen* now flying a mixture of Do 217 E-4, K-1 and M-1. Because of this, and no doubt due to the onset of Autumn weather, losses in October 1943 were light. The pattern of *Hptm.* Kurt Seyfarth of *Stab.*/KG 2's flying meant that he only flew missions on 2 October (mining Humber), 7 October (Norwich), 20 October (Hull) and 23 October (Great Yarmouth).

The first two losses of the month occurred on the night of 2 October 1943 when *Uffz.* Werner Troll of 7./KG 2 and *Uffz.* Anton Stadlmeier of 9./KG 2 were reported missing from minelaying in the Humber. Only one claim was made by a nightfighter that night – Flt Lt Percy Allen DFC and Bar and his Nav/Rad Flt Lt Norman Josling DFC of 68 Sqn claimed an Me 410 forty miles east of Winterton at 0040 hrs; no Me 410s were lost that night. The next loss was a Do 217 M-1 of 3./KG 2 on 7 October 1943 to Plt Off Jan Serhant of 68 Sqn. *Ofw.* Paul Treiber and his crew were one of 39 aircraft attacking Norwich and at 2100 hrs were detected by the Beaufighter which was patrolling 30-40 miles east of Great Yarmouth:

'The pilot obtained a visual on a Do 217 slightly above at 400 ft range with e/a's height only 300 ft. Fighter closed slightly to verify identification and opened fire from astern slightly below with cannon, machine gun and cine gun simultaneously from 100 yds closing to 50 yds. After a short burst strikes and a vivid explosion with blue, violet and red flashes came from between e/a's engine. The pilot was temporarily blinded by the explosion but the navigator told him to swing to starboard as the e/a was on fire and diving to port. The e/a hit the sea with a second large explosion and trailed fire which lasted 5-6 seconds.'

The four German crew were all reported missing believed killed. The final losses of the month were a Do 217 M-1 of 7./KG 2 flown by *Lt.* Wolf Müller and a Do 217 K-1 of 9./KG 2 flown by *Hptm.* Max Pommerening on the night of 23 October 1943. Pommerening had only recently taken command of 9.*Staffel*, his predecessor now being the *Kommandeur* of III./KG 2, and was by all accounts an experienced pilot, having served with *Stab.*/KG 27 in 1940, after which he became *Staffelkapitän* of 1./Erg.Gr. KG 27, which then became 10./KG 27. The fact that he lasted nine days after having returned to operational flying in what must have been a much different air war to 1940 is proof of how difficult things had become for the Luftwaffe bombers operating against mainland Britain. Two aircraft were reported by returning crews on the 23rd as having been seen going down in flames at 2320 and 2330 hrs. The target the night they were lost was Great Yarmouth which was attacked by 31 aircraft, with five Do 217s acting as pathfinders. *Oblt.* Josef Steudel of 8./KG 2 reported strong defences from light and heavy Flak and he spotted three nightfighters, although no RAF claims were filed. Another Do 217 K-1 of 8./KG 2 crashed on landing back at Gilze-Rijen killing *Fw.* Wilhelm Mentchen and his crew.

Losses by other Do 217 combat units in October 1943 appear to have been limited to the nightfighters, with 5./NJG 3 losing a Do 217 N-1 on 18 October 1943: *Hptm.* Paul Szameitat was hit in both engines by a Lancaster of 101 Sqn flown by Sgt Ron Daye which crashed at Weetzen. The German crew bailed out and their aircraft crashed at Barsinghausen and 4. and 6./NJG 101 lost a Do 217 N-1 and J-1 respectively on 22 October 1943. Of note is the first loss by 3./NJG 100 over the Eastern Front on 23 October when a Do 217 J-1 flown by *Fw.* Walter Schienbien suffered engine failure and crashed near Toltoschina. The pilot and one crew-member

were injured, and the two others killed. It should be stressed that by October 1943, the Do 217 was no longer being flown by II./NJG 1 and the following month saw no Do 217s with I. and II./NJG 3 and I./NJG 4. The remaining nightfighter operators from then on were II. and III./NJG 4 (until July 1944); I./NJG 100 (until August 1944); II./NJG 100 (until October 1944); and II./NJG 101. However, as each month went by, the numbers diminished, the Do 217 being replaced by more capable nightfighters. After 130 Do 217 J-1 and J-2s had been built and around 240 Do 217 N-1 and N-2s (around 95 N-1s were converted to N-2s), by October 1943 production of the Do 217 N ceased with preference being given to other nightfighters.

Reconnaissance Do 217 losses on the Eastern Front were limited to accidents – a Do 217 K-3 of 2./*Nachtaufklärungsstaffel* on 22 October and a Do 217 E-4 of 3./*Nachtaufklärungsstaffel* five days later. It is coincidental that despite the fact that approximately 710 Do 217s of all variants were built in the first three-quarters of 1943, just one was produced in the final quarter of 1943. From then on only modifications to existing Do 217s would be undertaken before the aircraft was all but phased out as a front line combat aircraft.

Operations continued to decline in November 1943. The first loss suffered by I. and III./KG 2 was a Do 217 from 9./KG 2, one of just seven attacking Norwich on 6 November. The pilot, *Lt.* Gerhard Wulfhorst, was apparently incapacitated by shell splinters, lost control and crashed at Gillingham in Norfolk. *Uffz.* Alwin Körk, the radio operator, was the only survivor. He bailed out, landing near the burning wreckage of his aircraft, which was then bombed by another Do 217. Both *Oblt.* Josef Steudel of 8./KG 2 and *Uffz.* Jakob Burkardt of 2./KG 2 flew just the one mission that month, attacking Ipswich on 3 November. They were among forty Do 217s which bombed the town that night but none were lost. Plymouth was the next target on the night of 15 November 1943. This mission did not start well. During the transfer from Gilze-Rijen to Vannes in preparation for the attack, the Do 217 M-1 flown by *Ofw.* Kurt Wessel which was carrying his normal crew and a mechanic, was intercepted near Alençon by Mustangs of 231 Sqn flown by Flt Lt Arthur Lee and Fg Off Fred Welch:

> 'Flt Lt Lee and Fg Off Welch took off from Redhill at 1434 hrs on Rhubarb operation to the Argentan-Coutance area. Out over English coast at Selsey Bill and in French coast at Cabourg. When in the area south of Villey or south-east of Falaise, Flt Lt Lee attacked the loco of a goods train observing strikes and large volume of steam. When flying west from Argentan a Do 217 was seen and attacked by both pilots and seen to crash in a large forest at Champsecret just east of Domfront. Flt Lt Lee states: "At approximately 1530 hrs I was flying along the railway line between Ecouche and Briouze with Fg Off Welch. We were flying at 300 ft going west; when we had almost reached Briouze my No.2 reported e/a at 5 o'clock. As soon as I saw it I told my No.2 I was going in to attack. I did complete turn to port and approached e/a from below and directly astern; when I considered I was in range I pulled up and I started firing. The port engine started to stream smoke first, then the starboard engine let out a stream of smoke. Pieces began to break off the fuselage, then the fuselage door fell off and three men bailed out and three chutes opened. A fourth chute came out but there was nothing attached to it. I closed in to about 150 yds and as my ammunition was about expended I broke to starboards. The e/a did a gentle turn to port and gradually lost height. My No.2 then made an attack and I watched it crash into a forest.'
>
> All five on board survived, albeit wounded.

Thirty-six Do 217s from KG 2, together with six Ju 88s from KG 6 and four pathfinder Ju 188s from KG 66, took part in the attack. No nightfighter claims were made but the Do 217 M-1 flown by *Lt.* Klaus Dicke failed to return and a Ju 88 of I./KG 6 became lost and the crew bailed out near Pontorson, near Rennes. *Uffz.* Georg Sanders and his crew from 2./KG 2 took part in this attack, their second of the war, their first being against Ipswich on 3 November. *Gefr.* Heinz Kilger (flight engineer) spoke afterwards of the attack:

III./KG 2 converting to the Do 217 M-1, Coulommiers, spring 1943. U5+HS is possibly W.Nr. 722851 which was lost attacking Plymouth on the night of 15 November 1943, killing Lt. Klaus Dicke and his crew.

Sqn Ldr Pat Thornton Brown (2nd from right) of 609 Sqn.

Below: Fg Off Artie Ross, 609 Sqn.

Right: Sqn Ldr Johnnie Baldwin (seen here as a Flying Officer with 609 Sqn).

'The target at Plymouth was some warehouses in the city. U5+CK flew out over the Channel Islands keeping low until they reached a predetermined climbing area. The return flight was to be made at a low altitude but the crew had some trouble with their fuel supply and when they found that the starboard tanks were registering empty, they gained height and just managed to get back to Rennes. The raids against Ipswich and Plymouth were deemed so successful that crews were permitted to count them as two war flights each for the purposes of decorations. This qualified the crew of U5+CK for the EK II [*Eisernes Kreuz* – Iron Cross, 2nd Class] since in KG 2 the EK II is normally given after three operations over England. For the EK I, thirteen war flights are required.'

Three members of this crew were destined never to receive the second award as they would be shot down in two weeks' time. These last sentences show how difficult things had become in the skies above Britain and the fact is that the effectiveness of the attack on Plymouth differs markedly in description in British records:

'Shortly before dawn on the Tuesday morning, however, 15 aircraft made penetration over the south-west with a minor concentration on Plymouth where house damage was caused; slight damage to two Key Points and one railway incident have been reported. Civilian casualties were 10 fatal and 22 serious.'

It would appear that the final death toll for this attack was 18 with another person killed at Paignton to the east of Plymouth.

KG 2 now returned to Holland and it was again left to V./KG 2 and I./SKG 10 to carry out sporadic attacks for the remainder of the month and these attacks were a shadow of those at the start of the year. Notably, on the night of 8 November 1943, three Me 410s of V./KG 2 were shot down by Fg Off Russell Steward of 29 Sqn, Sqn Ldr Bill Maguire of 85 Sqn and Fg Off Graeme Reed of 488 Sqn. Three crews were killed which included two former Do 217 pilots from II./KG 40 – *Maj.* Wilhelm Schmitter, *Staffelkapitän* of 15./KG 2 and *Uffz.* Heinz Holzmann of 14./KG 2. Schmitter, whose Me 410 was the only one to crash on land at Eastbourne – shot down by Sqn Ldr Bill Maguire – was posthumously awarded the *Eichenlaub* in 1944. The only other combat loss of note during the month was a Do 217 N-1 of *Stab* II./NJG 101 which crashed at Langendiebach after being damaged in combat on 26 November 1943, killing *Oblt.* Alfred Günther and two crew.

Early attacks for December 1943 were mounted by V./KG 2 and I./SKG 10, but the month got off to a very bad start when on the afternoon of 4 December, Typhoons of 198 and 609 Sqns attacked Eindhoven and Gilze-Rijen airfields. Six Typhoons of 609 Sqn, led by Sqn Ldr Pat Thornton-Brown, got airborne from RAF Lympne at 1400 hrs on Ramrod 34B. They had taken off earlier to rendezvous with 198 Sqn, airborne from RAF Manston, but had not been informed that the Ramrod had been delayed. Fg Off Georges Jaspis returned due to problems, but this time the remaining five Typhoons met up with nine Typhoons of 198 Sqn led by Sqn Ldr Johnnie Baldwin, formerly of 609 Sqn. This delay spelt disaster for KG 2 and in particular *Hptm.* Wilhelm Kunze's 3. *Staffel*, as the 609 Sqn diary reveals:

'Making landfall at the Dutch Islands at 8,000 ft with 198 to port 2,000 ft above, they approach Gilze-Rijen airfield where Fg Off Manu Geerts sees two twin-engine aircraft taking off. Sgt Leon Henrion is next put in the lead to conduct the squadron to eight plus which he has seen 1,000 ft below, only to have them disappear in haze. Then, near Eindhoven, four Do 217s are seen dead ahead and after that at least three other formations. The ensuing combats take 609 down to deck level where more Do 217s break away in all directions on being attacked. During this phase, 198 remains at 5,000 ft as cover after destroying the formation of four aircraft first contacted. Of the 609 Sqn pilots, the CO gets the first, this turning on its side and diving in flames to the ground. To his surprise, Fg Off Artie Ross gets a second with one short burst; he evidently severs the controls for it goes down in a spiral with one smoking engine and also crashed near Eindhoven. Ross photographs the wreckage and sees six parachutes descending. From 2,000 ft he then sights another Dornier darting among trees and houses in an attempt to shake off another Typhoon. This is Sgt Henrion who has got down here avoiding a collision with 198. Henrion shoots at the Dornier from close range but has to pull up sharply to avoid trees. Ross finished it off and this e/a ends in another smoking heap. Geerts misses his first attack through misunderstanding someone to say they were friendly, squirts at a second only to find someone

else has this in hand and eventually follows a third to the deck, chases it across the airfield with a series of short bursts at 100 yds and despite the fact that only his starboard guns are working, hits it in the starboard engine. After much evasive action, this Dornier hits an obstruction, swivels round and comes to pieces. Fg Off Charles Detal also chases an e/a to the deck producing a stream of petrol with a deflection shot. Chasing it across Eindhoven, he overshoots, climbs and dives on its tail whereupon e/a turns and faces once more the gauntlet of Flak, which of course has joined in with a vengeance. Finally a red glow is seen from within, a wheel drops and it crashes on its wingtip in the centre of the 'drome. As he turns away, there is another Dornier weaving among the trees. This he bags from 75 yds astern. On climbing back to 2,000 ft, Detal finds the rest of his colleagues gone so he returns alone (0 ft). The final combat is when after starting to withdraw, the CO attacks a solitary Dornier at 1,000 ft from dead astern. He obtains strikes and e/a turns on its side and dives whereupon the indefatigable Ross finally dispatches it and it explodes on the ground and sets fire to a wood.'

198 Sqn claimed to have destroyed four Do 217s, 609 Sqn seven. Five Do 217s were lost and one damaged, four destroyed and one damaged from 3./KG 2, one destroyed from 7./KG 2. Eleven aircrew were killed and nine wounded, one of the wounded being *Hptm.* Wilhelm Kunze. The loss of so many aircraft and aircrew in one go must have seriously hampered KG 2's ability to carry out further missions in the month, as surviving logbooks prove. To make matters worse for KG 2, 609 and 198 Sqns would carry out a repeat performance in exactly a month's time.

The only other losses occurred on the night of 10 December 1943. The target this night was the ball-bearing factory in Chelmsford assigned to 56 aircraft, of which it would appear only four Ju 188s of I./KG 6 and six Do 217s attacked the primary target, the remainder attacking a wide spread of secondary targets. Returning crews reported seeing aircraft being shot down or crashing at 1900 hrs, 1916 hrs, 1917 hrs and 1920 hrs and that nightfighters were active. Fg Off Ray 'Joe' Schultz and Fg Off Vern Williams, his Nav/Rad, of 410 Sqn, were responsible for three of the four Do 217s lost that night:

'When Fg Off Schultz and Fg Off Williams took off at 1800 hrs to carry out a routine patrol, they little thought that they were about to make a bit of history. Nevertheless, before they landed, they had destroyed three Do 217s and had themselves narrowly escaped being shot down. After receiving the normal help from ground control, a visual of a Do 217 was obtained at a range of 7,000 ft and the Mosquito closed in rapidly to 150 ft when the e/a fired a long accurate burst and peeled off to port. The Mosquito was not hit and following the Jerry down got in a short burst which set starboard engine on fire. The e/a continued evasive action, losing height rapidly and at 9,000 ft our pilot fired a long burst which resulted in a large flash and explosion on the starboard side. All return fire had ceased by now but the Hun kept up evasion trying to gain cloud cover at 7,000 ft. However he went straight through it. The Mosquito followed and at 1,500 ft the e/a steadied up, opened his bomb doors and tried to jettison bombs which were not seen to fall. Our pilot fired another long burst from quarter astern and the Do 217 was seen to hit the sea, burning furiously. After climbing as fast as possible to 15,000 ft another visual of a Do 217 was obtained at 7,000 ft range. Fg Off Schultz opened fire from dead astern at 900 ft and closed in. The e/a blew up when Mosquito was 50 ft behind and our aircraft flew through the debris. There was no evasive action or return fire on the part of the e/a and our crew think the bombs must have exploded as a considerable jar was felt when the Dornier exploded. Immediately after this second combat our crew obtained a visual of a third Do 217 at a height of 12,000 ft range 7,000 ft 10 degrees to starboard. A long combat then ensued during which the enemy pilot showed a high degree of airmanship and Fg Off Schultz had to make every use of the manoeuvrability of his aircraft in order to follow him. The Mosquito fired a number of short bursts but even though both its engines were on fire the enemy pilot still took violent evasive action down to sea level while every available gun put out a defensive barrage. The Mosquito was hit in the nose while a cannon shell smashed the instrument panel, just missing the pilot by three inches. The final burst caused the e/a's port engine to blaze and the Jerry eventually hit the sea going straight in. The Mosquito's starboard engine started to splutter and the pilot was about to feather it when the port engine packed up and after the port had been feathered the fire went out. The pilot managed to get his aircraft back to Bradwell Bay on one engine despite the fact that his temperature gauges had been shot away.'

The Mosquito crew got so close to their victims that they could clearly see the Swastikas on the tail. They also noted that the dorsal turrets glinted in the moonlight and that the last aircraft they shot down had guns in the tail section. In a post-war interview, Ray Schultz gave more detail on the last combat. The Do 217 had become a ball of flames so they closed in to get a better look at it only to see, to their horror, the dorsal turret rotate towards them and the gunner opening fire from the inferno. The German managed to rake the Mosquito from one wing to the other and, amazingly, the bullets passed either side of Schultz and Vern Williams, the latter suffering slight splinter wounds from Perspex. When back on the ground they found that one 13 mm bullet had penetrated the nose, been deflected by the bulkhead armour plating and ended up spent on the cockpit floor. The second bullet showed how lucky the crew were:

'13 mm bullet entered port side of fuselage immediately forward of the armour plated bulkhead causing a 3-inch diameter hole in wooden structure. It struck the extreme edge of the armour plate and broke up. One large fragment penetrated wooden former almost severing it between armour plate and fuselage and passed through the instrument panel, shattering one radiator temperature gauge and causing a hole. This fragment was probably spent and may have passed below the pilot's left arm but no marks can be traced on the pilot's seat armour plate. Other fragments passed out of the fuselage through the entry hole, undoubtedly enlarging it, and struck port mainplane engine cowling and the undercarriage nacelle faring. Two small fragments entered the lower leading edge of mainplane near fuselage and five small fragments entered coolant radiator causing loss of coolant. This caused engine to become overheated and catch fire and the pilot was unable to ascertain the temperature due to the damage to the gauge on the instrument panel.'

Also that night, Wg Cdr Dennis Hayley-Bell of 68 Sqn claimed two more Do 217s damaged at 2015-2020 hrs off

Wg Cdr Dennis Hayley-Bell (right) with Fg Off Harry Uzzell.

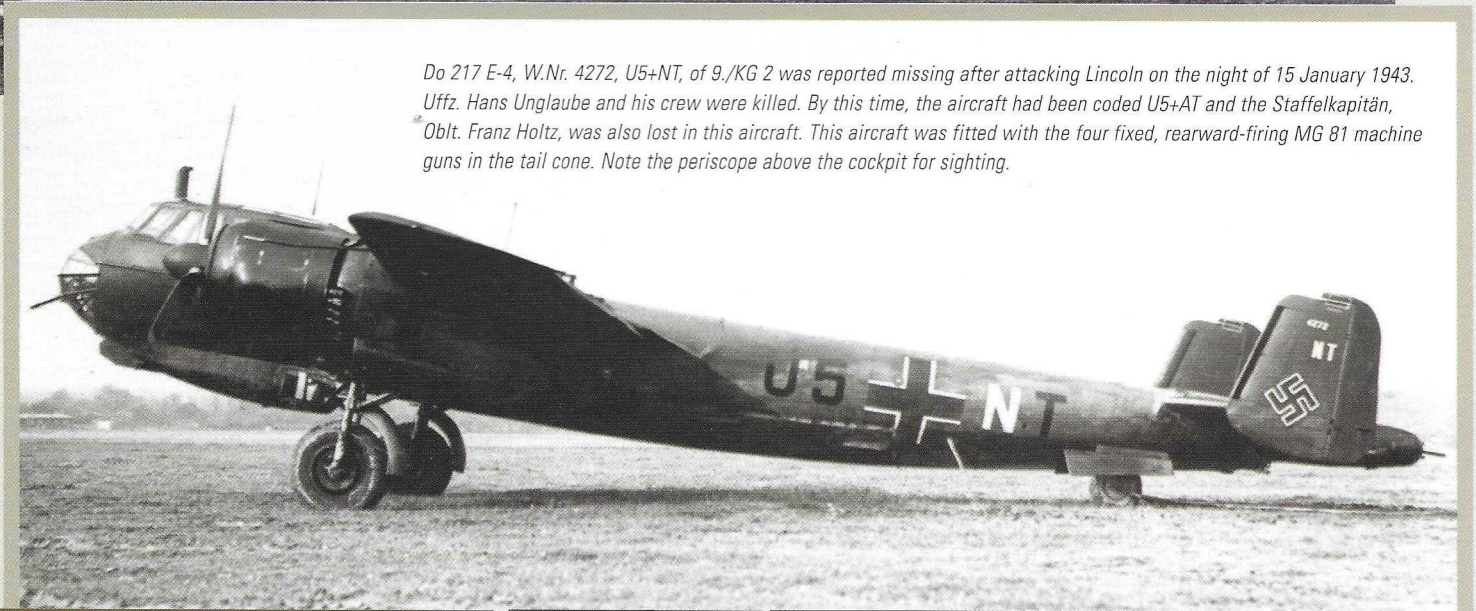
Ipswich and close to the Belgian Coast, as did Fg Off Don Norman of 410 Sqn at 1940 hrs north of Chelmsford. *Stab* KG 2 lost *Lt.* Friedrich Roch and his crew; 2./KG 2 *Lt.* Friedrich von der Felsen and *Uffz.* Georg Sandner and their crews; and 8./KG 2 lost *Fw.* Hubert Faust and his crew. Just one crew-member survived that night – *Gefr.* Heinz Filger who, with *Uffz.* Georg Sandner and *Ogefr.* Herbert Mechsner, was on their third operational flight. Their regular *Beobachter* had been taken ill and replaced by *Oblt.* Walter Kinzel, a Flak officer who had apparently been trained as an Observer. Despite his inexperience, Filger gave the RAF considerable information, including what happened on their last flight:

> 'Times for attack were very definitely laid down and POW thought that two aircraft were to be over the target every minute. The course to be flown was direct from visual beacon *Nora* (Noordwijk) to the target and the crews were to navigate by dead reckoning. Two *Steigraum* (climbing areas) were defined over the North Sea – instructions were to climb to 2500 m on reaching the first, which was probably the middle of the North Sea, and to climb to 4000/4500 m on reaching the second *Steigraum*.
>
> 'A Lux buoy was to be dropped some 20-30 km off the English coast at a predetermined position on a given bearing from the target. When they had located the buoy, crew were to correct their course and head straight for the objective, losing height the whole way in order to arrive over the target flying fast at a height of about 2000 m. The bombs were to be released flying east to west.
>
> 'U5+CK, carrying four 500-kg SD and four 50-kg SD bombs, was the first aircraft of the *Gruppe* to take off and started at approximately 1800 hrs. The crew crossed the Dutch coast at visual beacon *Nora* and a height of 200 m and gained height in the two climbing areas according to plan.
>
> 'They had no difficulty in locating the Lux buoy but on sighting it realised that they would arrive over target too early and in order to fill in time they circled at a height of 4000 m. While doing so they were surprised by a nightfighter which almost immediately scored hits in the cockpit; the aircraft caught fire and the pilot gave orders to bail out. The aircraft subsequently crashed into the sea with all bombs on board and with the exception of the *Bordmechaniker* who managed to swim ashore, the whole crew was lost.'

Attacks for the remainder of 1943 were minimal with sporadic attacks by I./SKG 10 (which resulted in two losses on the night of 22 December 1943 during a 13 aircraft *Störangriff* attack on Eastbourne) and V./KG 2 (which resulted in one loss on the night of 19 December 1943 in a joint attack by six Me 410s and twelve Fw 190s of I./SKG 10 against London). It had been an increasingly bloody and hard year for the Do 217 crews who suffered heavy losses, but at the same time achieved a number of notable successes especially with Hs 293 and *Fritz* X.

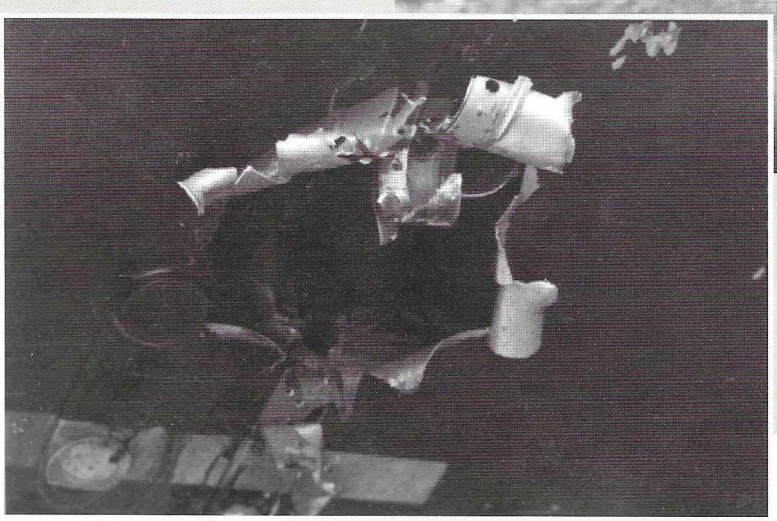
By December 1943, the Do 217 was no longer being built and newer aircraft were at last coming into service, as seen with II./KG 2 taking on the Ju 188 and KG 66 equipping on the Ju 88 S for pathfinding. It was also clear that, apart from a small few, pilots felt that the Do 217 J failed to meet their expectations as a nightfighter and, although lighter and more heavily armed, the Do 217 N was still inferior to newer types of nightfighter. The year 1944 would therefore see the Do 217, as a combat aircraft, barely lasting eight more months.

A Do 217 K of KG 2 taxies out amidst the wintery conditions of January 1943.



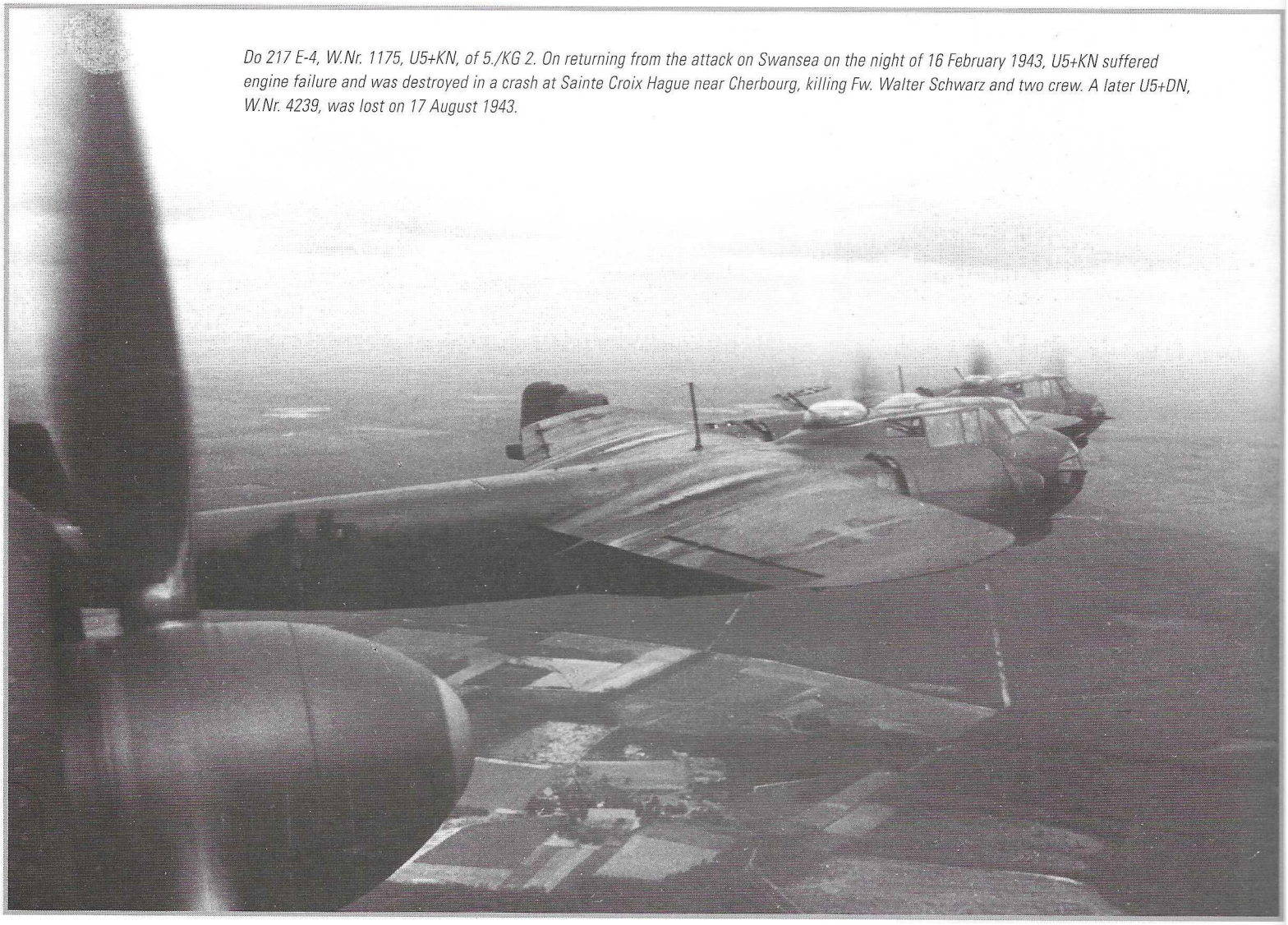
Do 217 E-4, W.Nr. 4272, U5+NT, of 9./KG 2 was reported missing after attacking Lincoln on the night of 15 January 1943. Uffz. Hans Unglaube and his crew were killed. By this time, the aircraft had been coded U5+AT and the Staffelkapitän, Oblt. Franz Holtz, was also lost in this aircraft. This aircraft was fitted with the four fixed, rearward-firing MG 81 machine guns in the tail cone. Note the periscope above the cockpit for sighting.

Oblt. Franz Holtz, Staffelkapitän of 9./KG 2, and his fiancée.

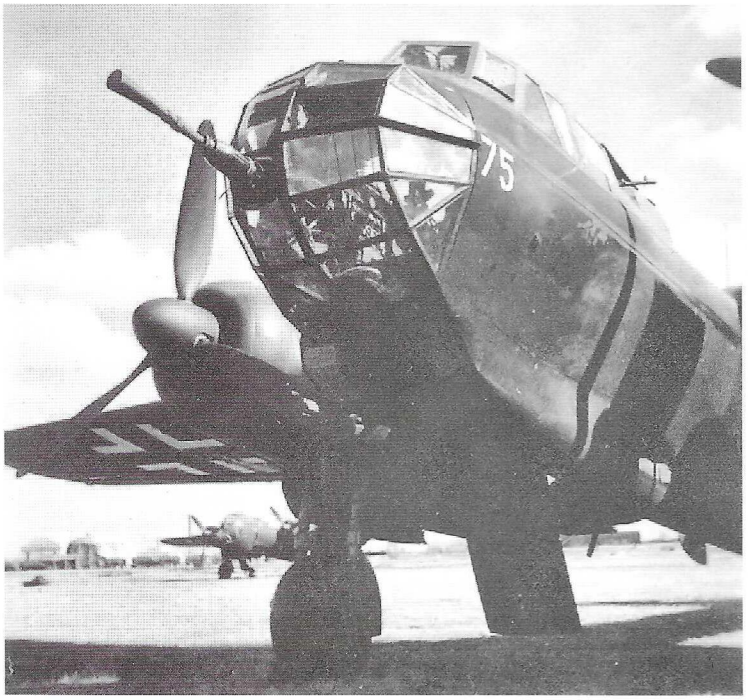


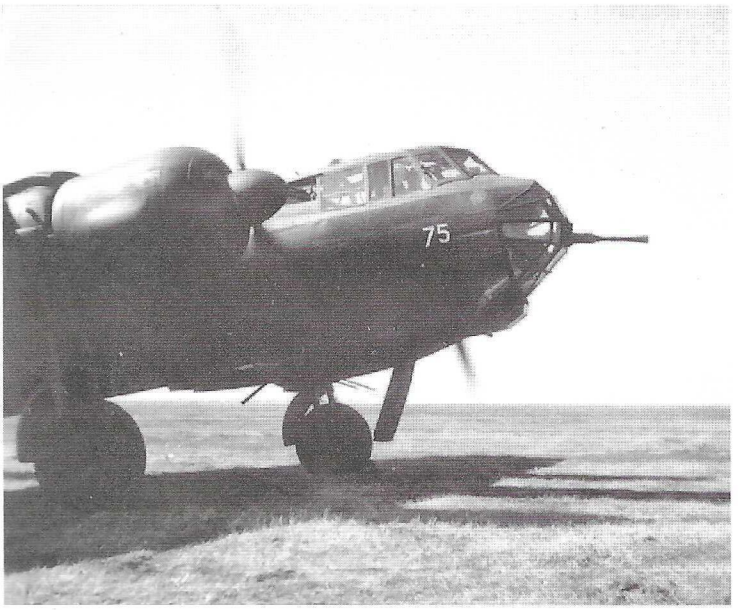
Left and above: Damage to Lt. Hermann Walther's Do 217 E-4, February 1943. Walther (right) flew with III./KG 2.

Do 217 E-4, U5+IR, of 7./KG 2. Despite the last two numerals of Werknummer being visible on the nose, the fate of this aircraft has not been ascertained.



Do 217 E-4, W.Nr. 1175, U5+KN, of 5./KG 2. On returning from the attack on Swansea on the night of 16 February 1943, U5+KN suffered engine failure and was destroyed in a crash at Sainte Croix Hague near Cherbourg, killing Fw. Walter Schwarz and two crew. A later U5+DN, W.Nr. 4239, was lost on 17 August 1943.





Above left and above: A Do 217 E-4 believed to be from 4./Nachtaufklärungsstaffel. (via Davis)

Right: The bola hatch in the lowered position on this Do 217 E-4, W.Nr. 5332. This aircraft had a long career, starting as an E-2 with II./KG 2 and being damaged in an accident on 19 December 1942. Repaired and upgraded to an E-4, it was damaged in combat on 13 March 1943 and then suffered another accident on 3 April 1943. Repaired, it was damaged in another accident with IV./KG 2 on 4 October 1943. This photograph was dated February 1943 and taken at Schiphol. It appears to show the aircraft after it had been upgraded to an E-4, as its paintwork appears new. (via Taghon).

An unidentified Do 217 K-1 of 4./Nachtaufklärungsstaffel which has suffered a landing mishap. The starboard gear has partially collapsed whilst the port has retracted.

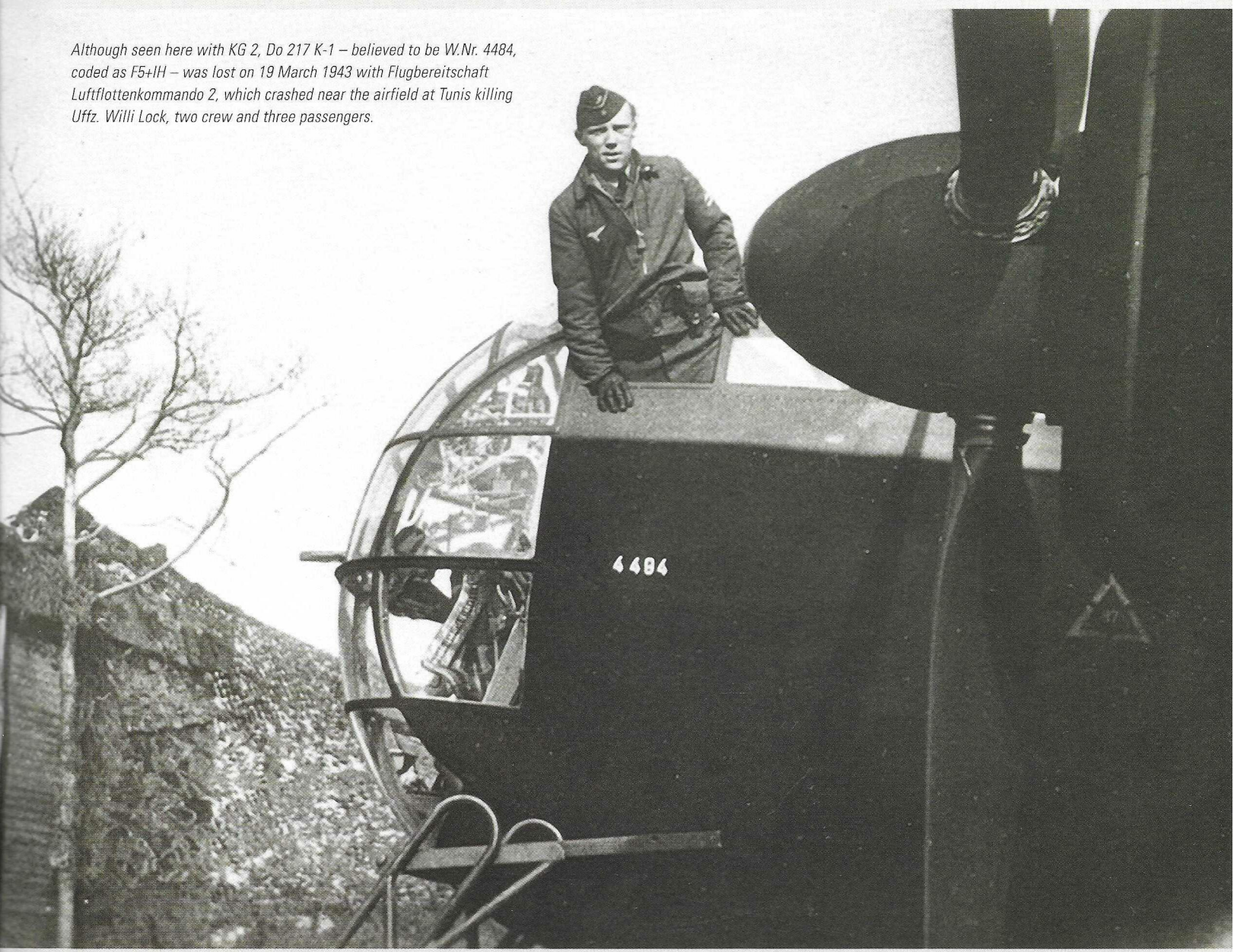
Above: Lt. Karl-Heinrich Hertam of 6./KG 2. He was flying as the observer to Uffz. Walter Schmurr whose Do 217 E-4, W.Nr. 5573, U5+KP, was shot down attacking Chelmsford and crashed near Colchester on 15 April 1943.

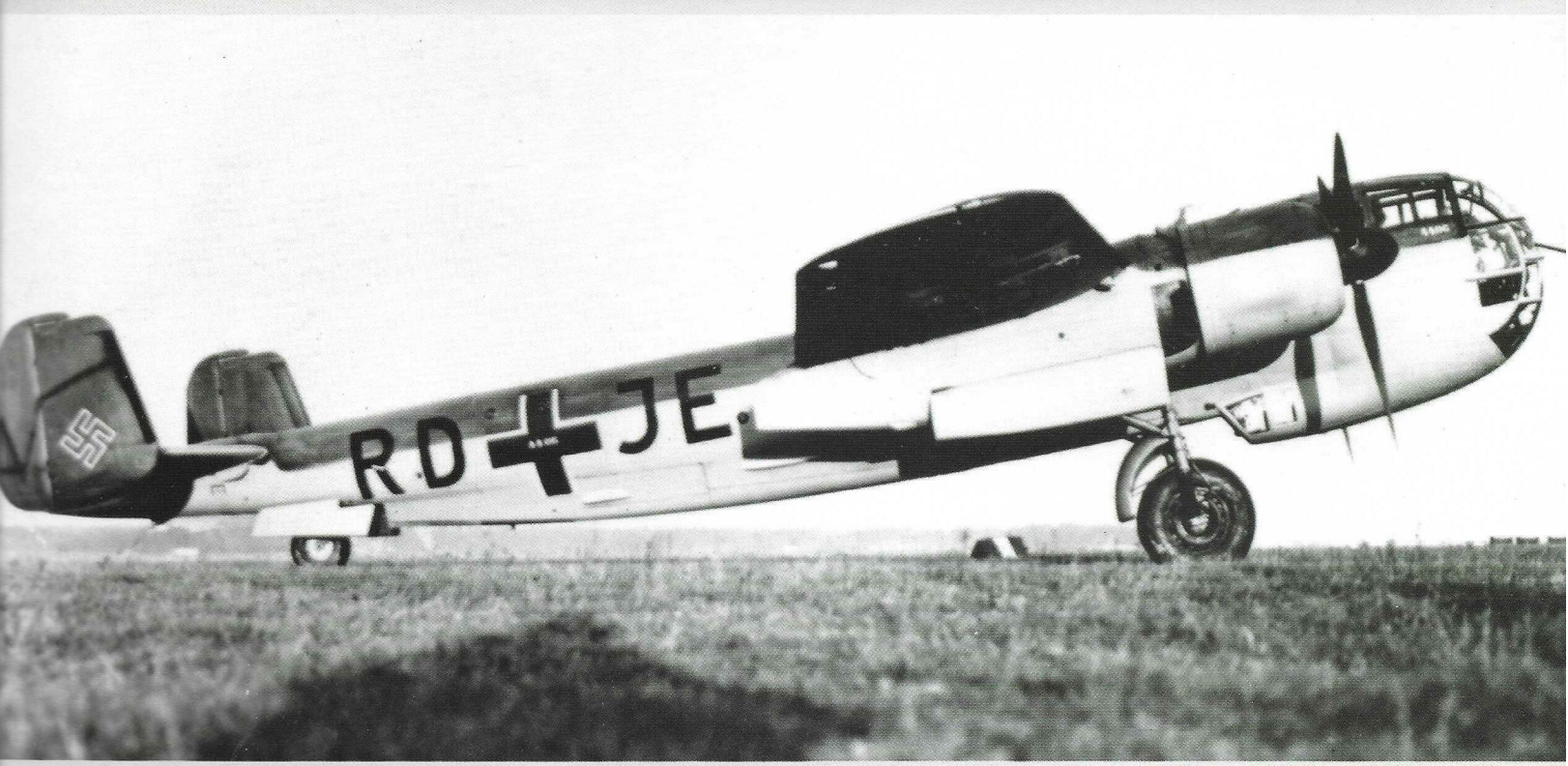
Right: At far right is Uffz. Werner Beihofer, radio operator on Do 217 E-4, W.Nr. 5313, F8+LP, of 6./KG 40 which was lost attacking Hartlepool on the night of 11 March 1943. None of the crew was ever found.

A Do 217 K-1, presumably from KG 2 but showing no markings to indicate its unit.

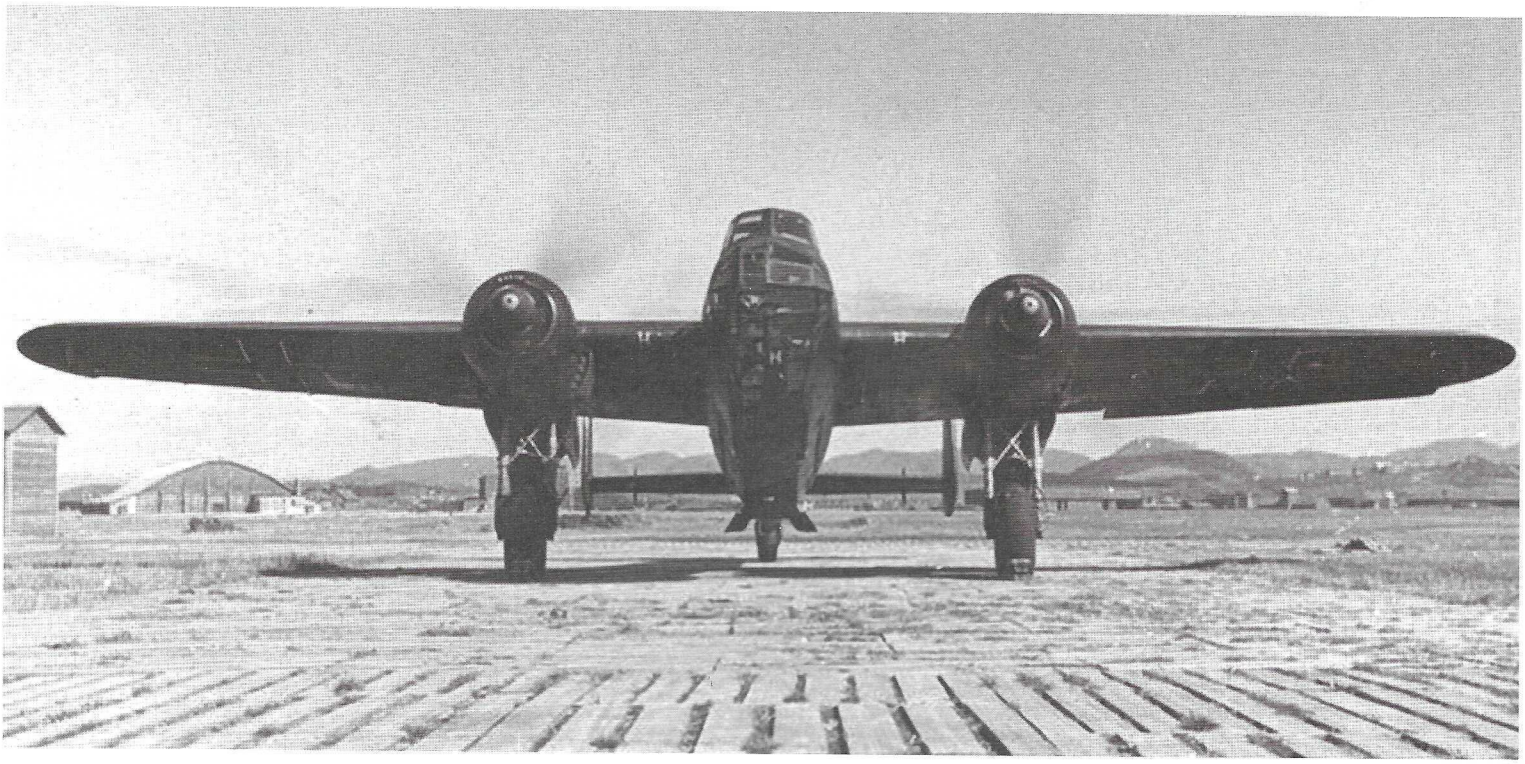
Below: A Do 217 K-1 of Flugbereitschaft Luftflottenkommando 2, indicated by the badge on the nose and the white Mediterranean fuselage band (just visible). On 22 April 1943, Do 217 K-1, W.Nr. 4601, F5+NH, was reported missing between Rome and Tunis and was a possible victim of friendly fire.

Although seen here with KG 2, Do 217 K-1 – believed to be W.Nr. 4484, coded as F5+IH – was lost on 19 March 1943 with Flugbereitschaft Luftflottenkommando 2, which crashed near the airfield at Tunis killing Uffz. Willi Lock, two crew and three passengers.

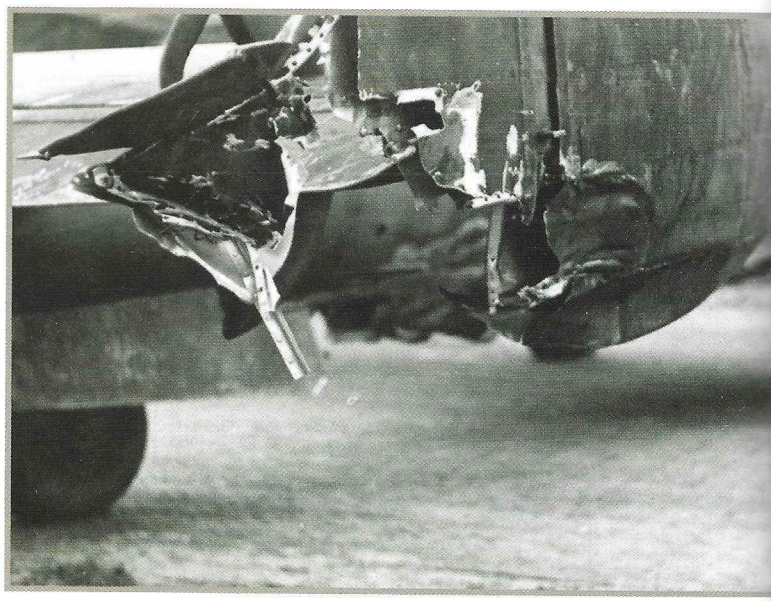




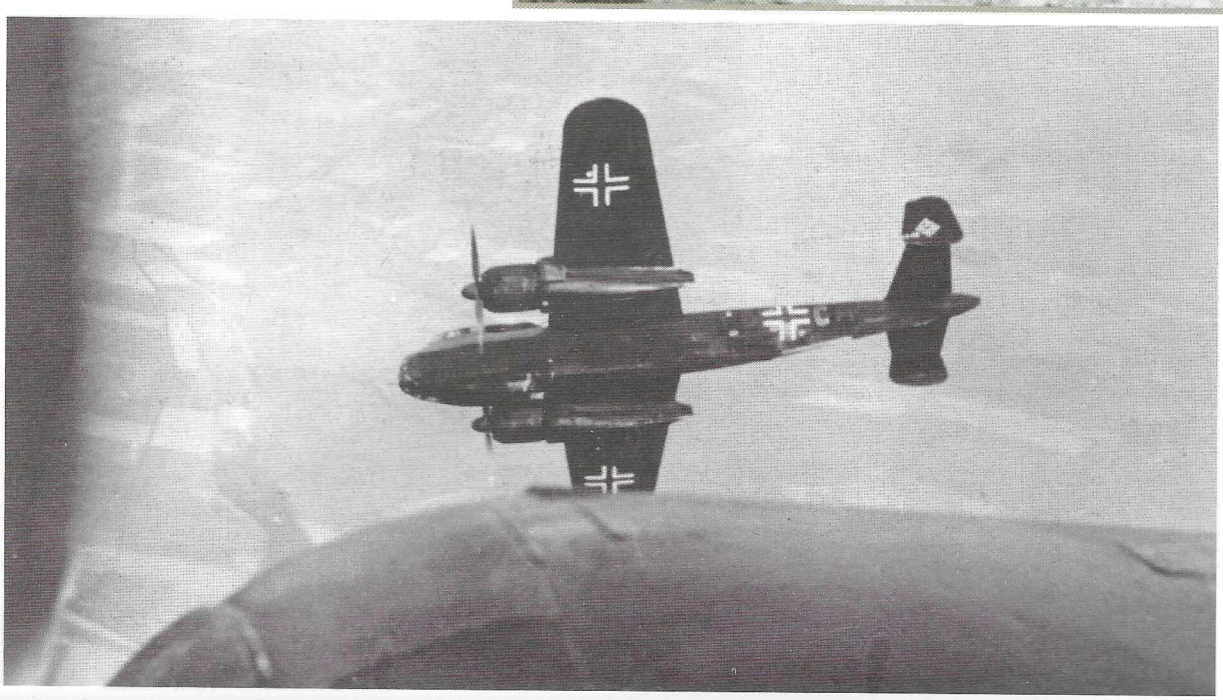
Factory fresh and rolled-out, Do 217 K-1, W.Nr. 4406, RD+JE, was flying with KGzbV 21 when, on 21 January 1943, it suffered a minor accident at Schwäbisch Hall.



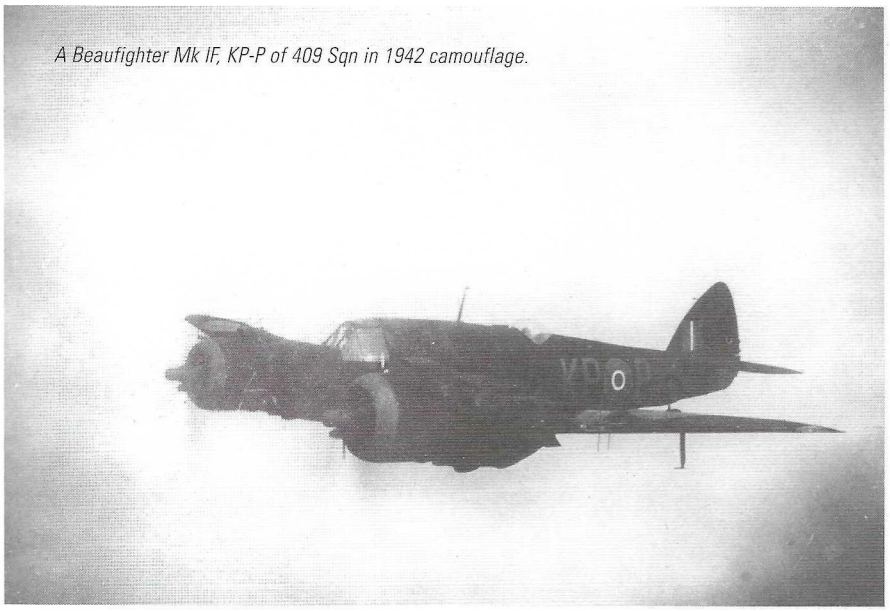
A Do 217 E-4, coded H, seen at Stavanger-Sola in Norway in April 1943, during which time it must have been involved in the attack on Aberdeen.



Combat damage to a Do 217 E-4 of 8./KG 2. It has not been possible to date these photographs.



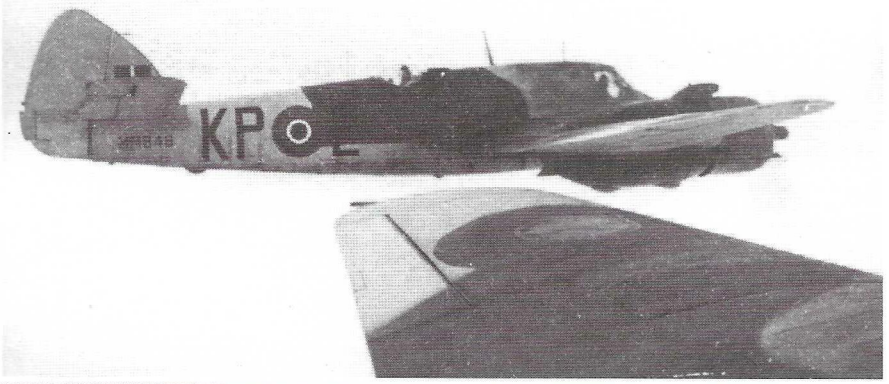
Photographed in May 1943 is this Do 217 E-4, W.Nr. 5424, F8+CM, of 4./KG 40. On 18 May 1943, F8+CM failed to return from operations, Ofw. Erich Harms and his crew being reported missing, believed killed.



A Beaufighter Mk IF, KP-P of 409 Sqn in 1942 camouflage.

Lt. Wolfgang Nestler of 6./KG 2 in front of Do 217 K-1, U5+BP. He would have an eventful war, eventually flying the Ju 188 with KG 2 and would survive the war.

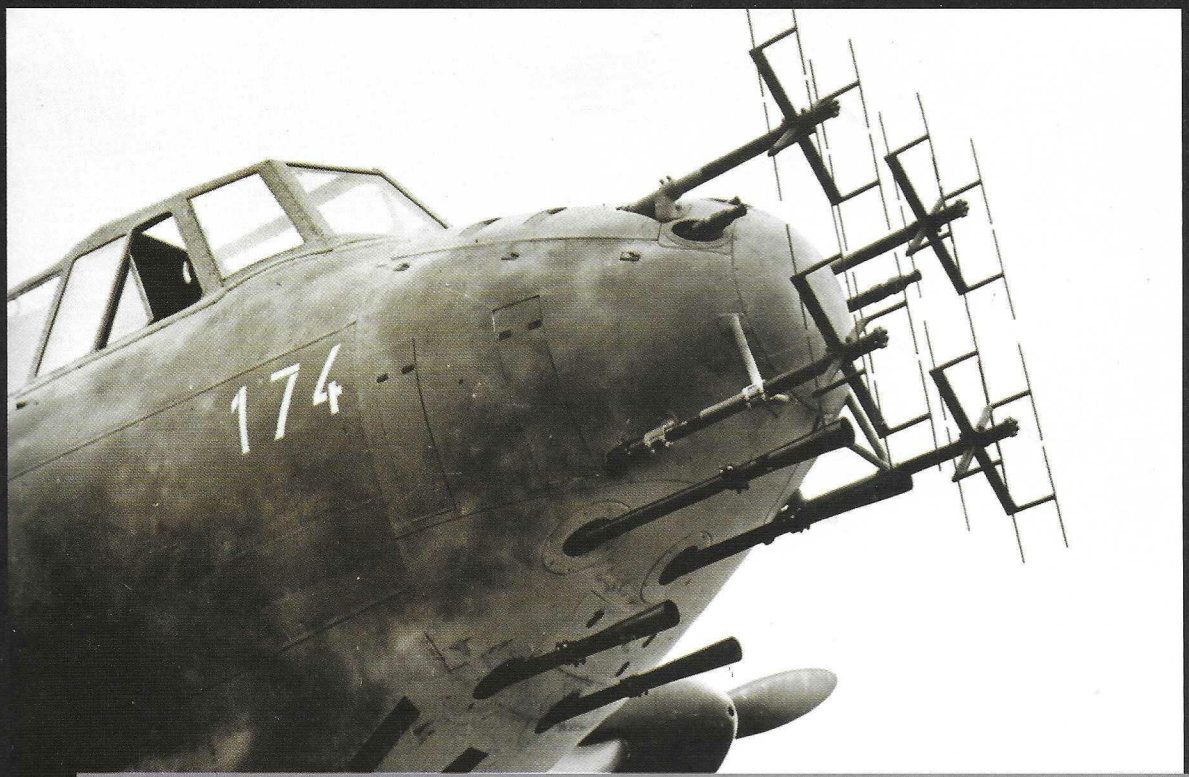
A Beaufighter Mk VIF, MM848/KP-E of 409 Sqn photographed in 1943.



A Do 217 E-4, U5+DV, of IV./KG 2 after suffering a landing accident, 1943. (via Olrog)

Another KG 2 Do 217 E-4 has come to grief after a heavy landing – no date or location. (via Olrog)

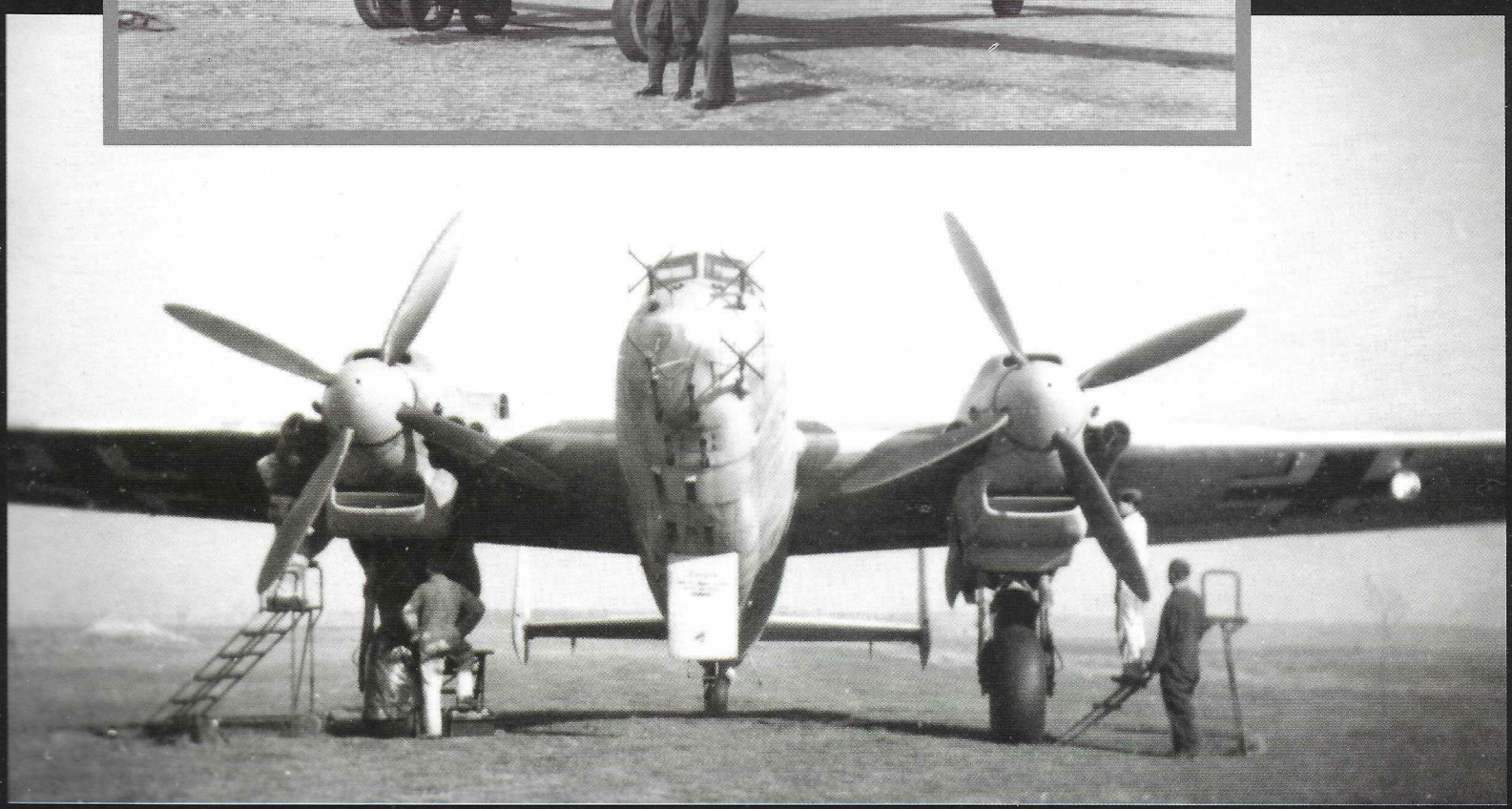
Do 217 E-5 showing the bulge for the Kehl guided-bomb directional equipment. The Kehl-Straßburg radio control link was used to guide Fritz X and Hs 293 guided bombs.



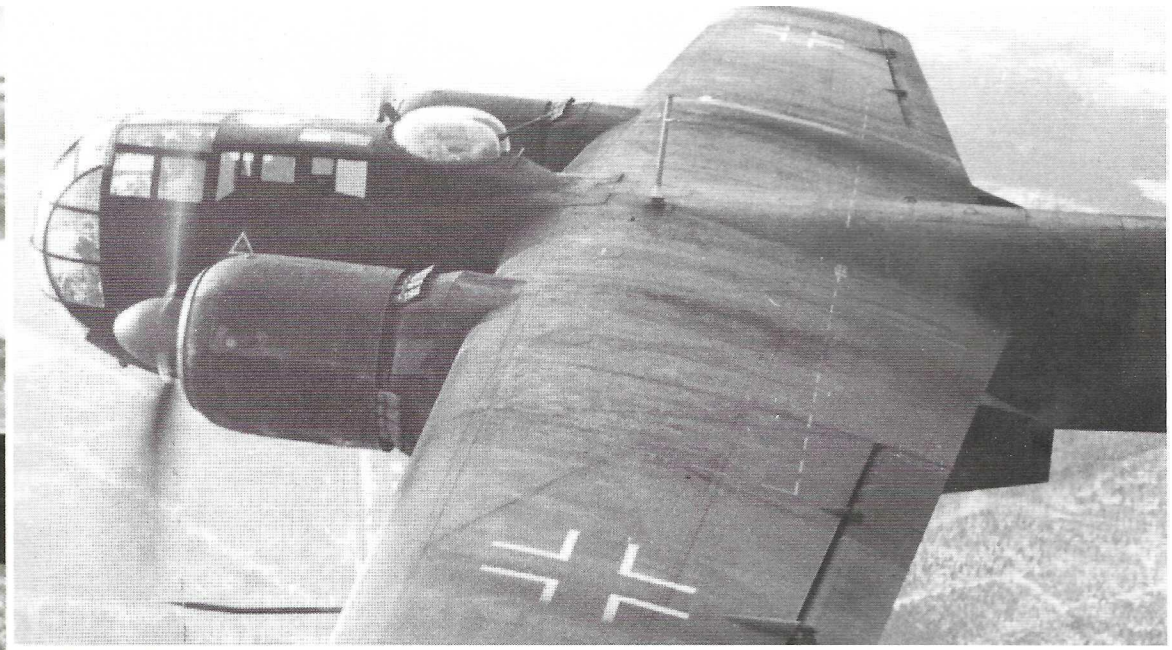
Close-up of the nose of a Do 217 N-1 of which the last three digits of the Werknummer 174 do not offer any clue to its fate. Seen here are the FuG 202 Lichtenstein aerials, four 20 mm cannon and two MG 81s.

Left: Do 217 J-1, G3+PV, of II./NJG 101 in 1943. Note the nose-mounted aerials have been removed. (via Taghon)

Below: Do 217 N-1, G3+SV, of II./NJG 101, 1943. (via Taghon)



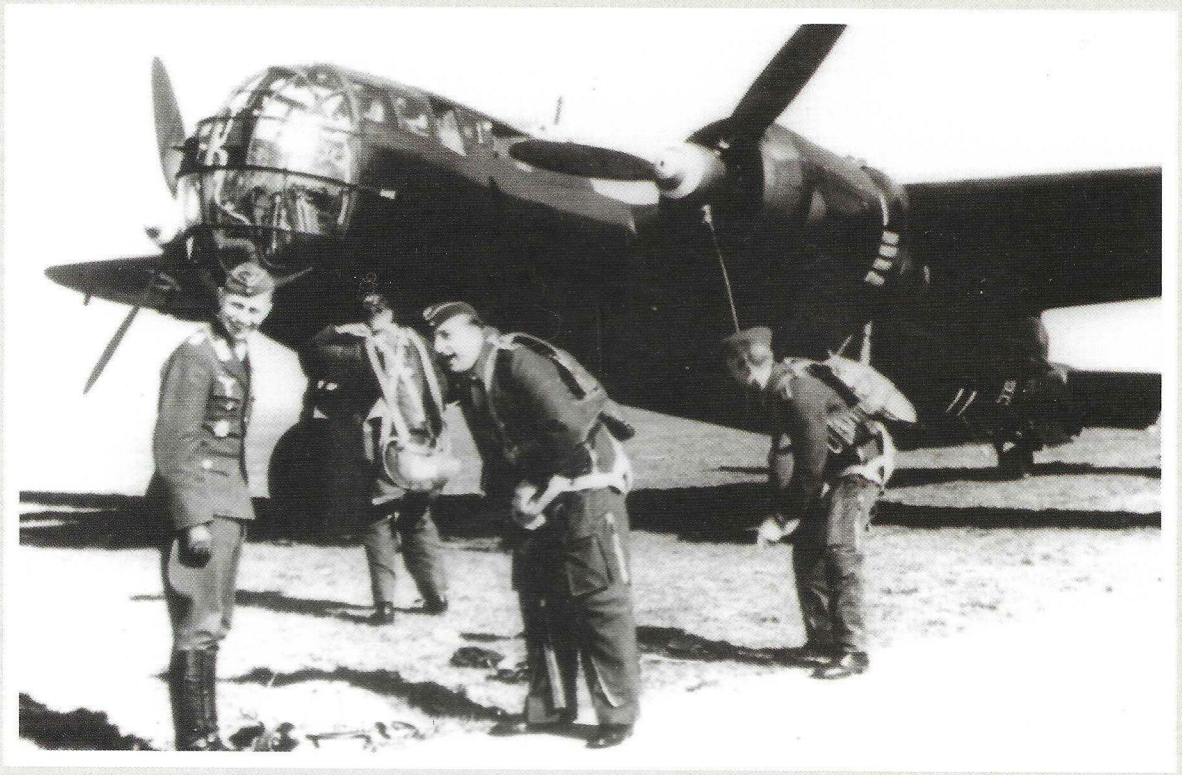
Above and right: Do 217 N-2, G3+NO, of NJG 101 photographed at Sofia-Bojuritsche in 1943 showing the tail braking parachute and, on the top of the fuselage, the Schräge Musik four-cannon installation.



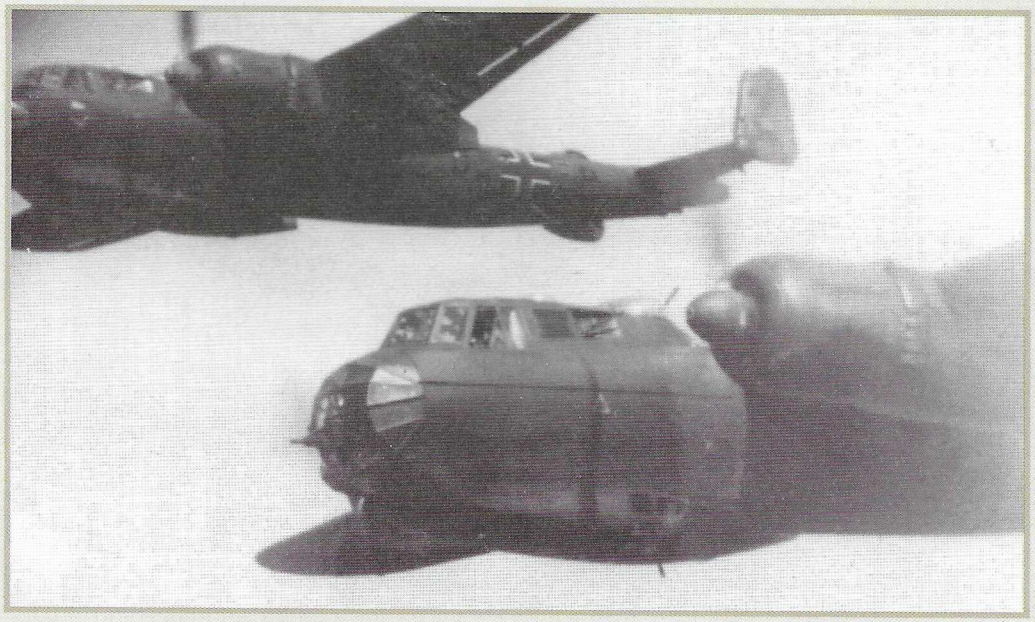
Do 217 K-1 of KG 2 believed to be W.Nr. 4425 which was flying with II./KG 2 in August 1943.

Although of poor quality, this image shows damage to the tail cone of Lt. Ernst-Karl Fara's Do 217, 1./KG 2, 1943. Fara flew his first mission with KG 2 in June 1943 but by the end of the year was flying Ju 188s with I./KG 66.

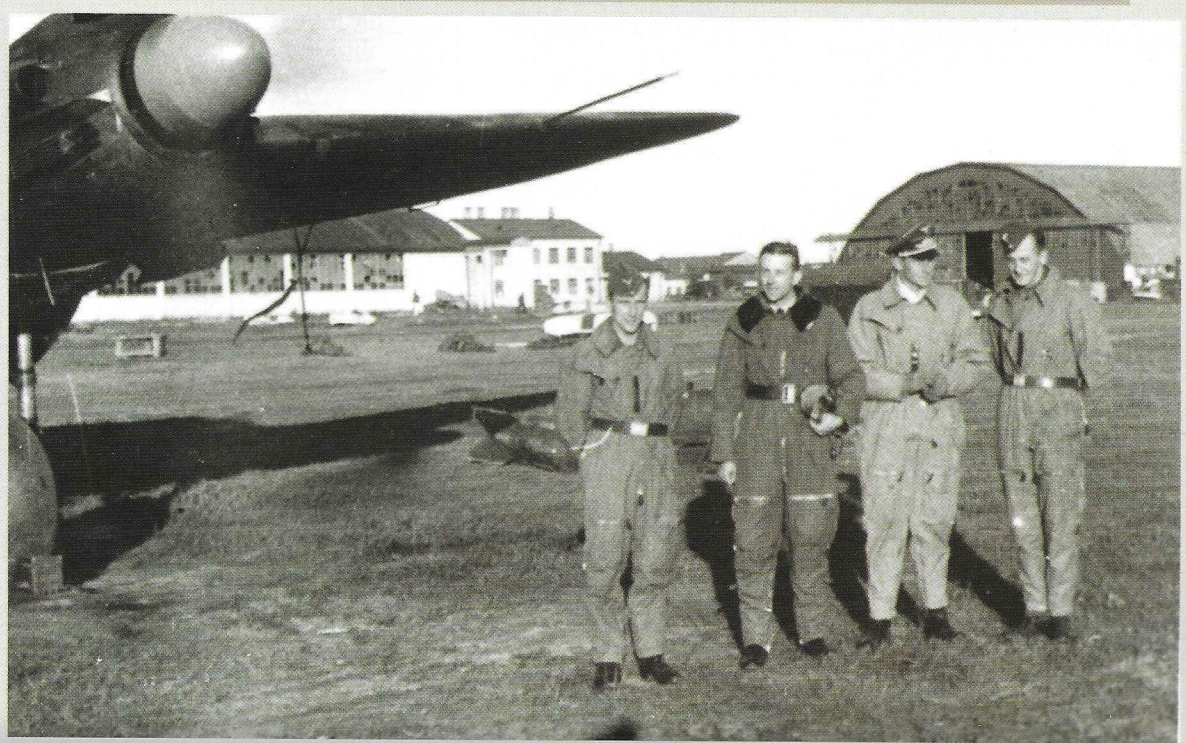
Do 217 K-1, W.Nr. 4437. This aircraft was reported as suffering minor damage at Salon on 22 April 1943 while with IV./KG 2. Note the letter 'E' on the leading edge.



Maj. Walter Bradel (third from left) shares a light moment in front of Do 217 K-1, U5+AA, of Stab./KG 2. Some records state this aircraft was W.Nr. 4415, the aircraft in which he was flying when he was killed on 5 May 1943. Others state it was W.Nr. 4405 which suffered an engine failure while with 2./Nachtaufklärungsstaffel on 22 October 1943 and crashed in Belarus. Far left is Maj. Gottfried Buchholz, the Geschwader Technical Officer.



Do 217 E-4s of 9./KG 2, including U5+EP; by mid-1943, III./KG 2 was converting to the K and M variant.

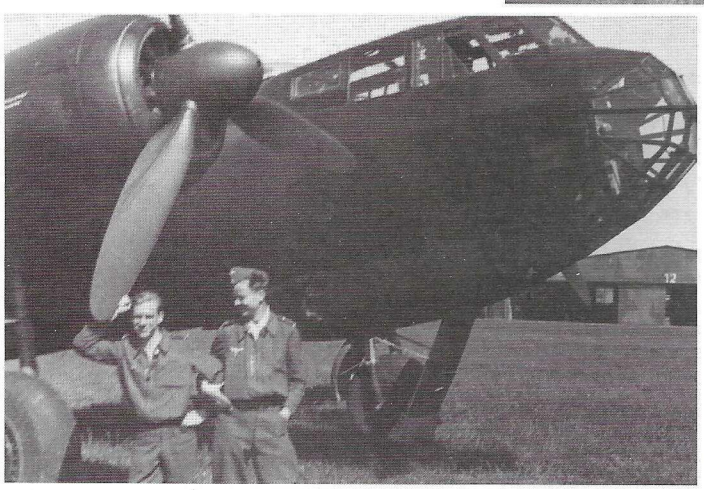


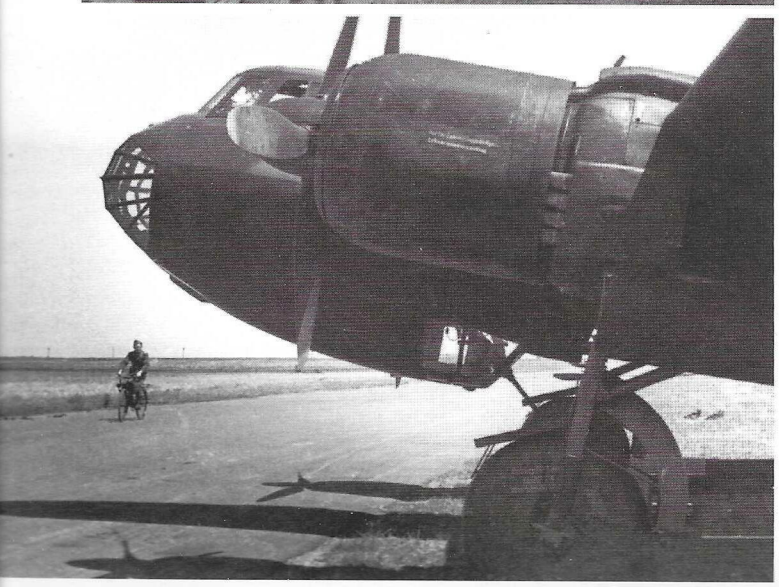
Oblt. Rudi Mohrmann (second right), formerly of Stab III./KG 26, one of the initial commanders of the unit which would become I./KG 66.

I./KG 66 training at Chartres. Right is Lt. Hans Altrogge.

Below: I./KG 66 either arriving for or departing from training at Chartres in the spring of 1943. The egg-shaped objects to left may be runway lights. (via Heijkop)

Do 217 E-4 of I./KG 66, Chartres, summer 1943. Note the additional Y-Gerät aerial behind the cockpit.

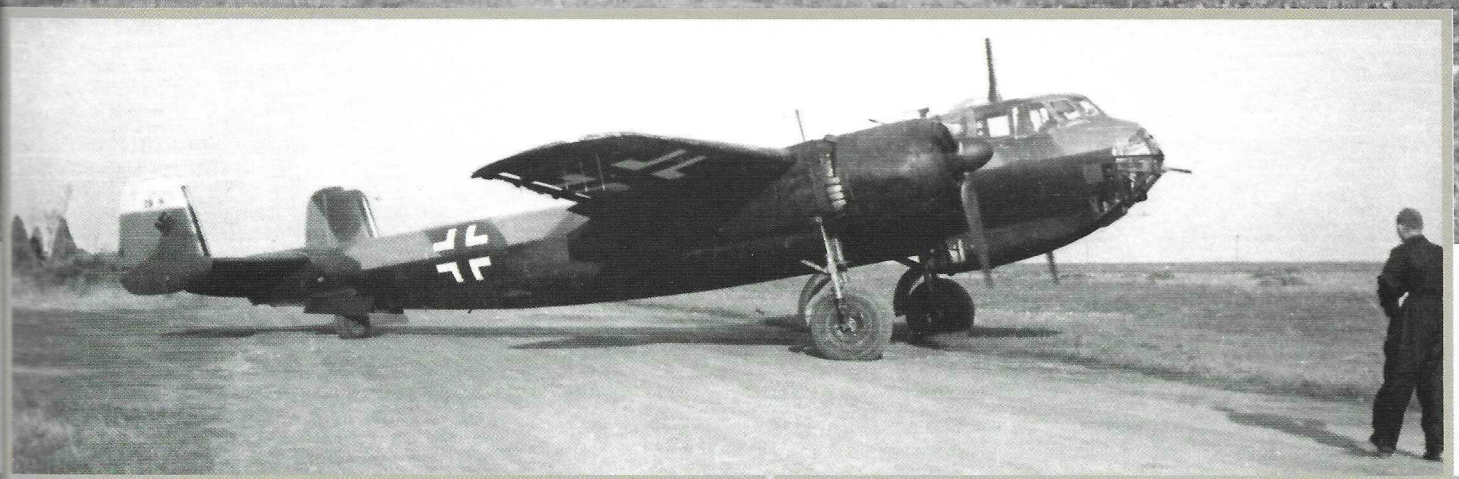


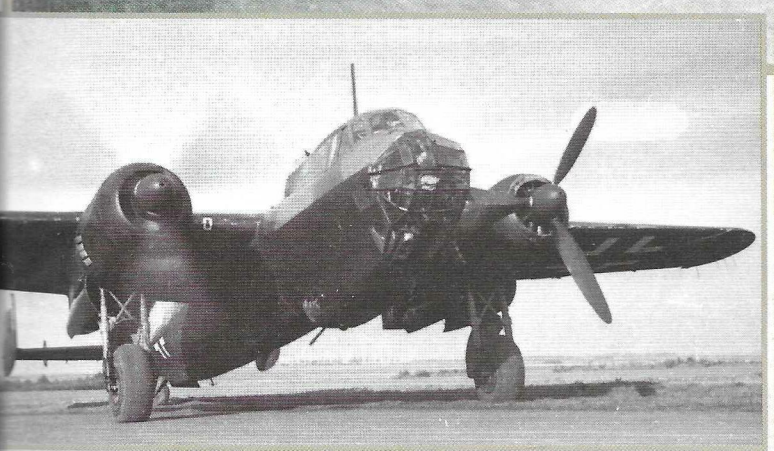


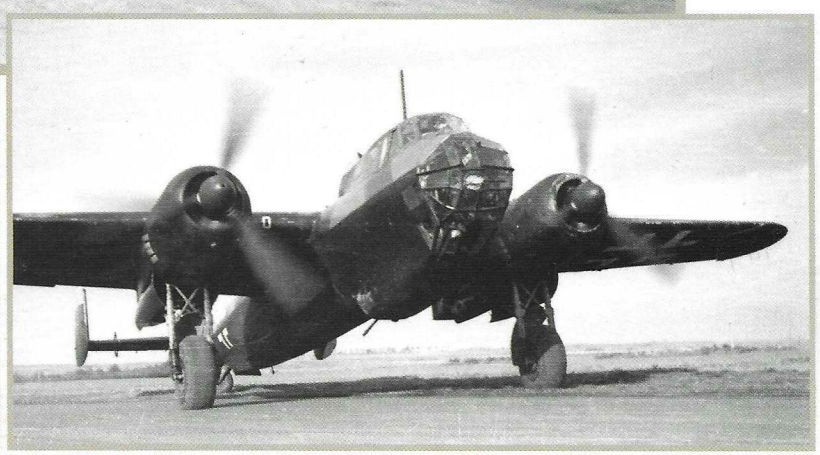
Do 217 K-1, W.Nr. 4472, of I./KG 66 at Chartres, 1943.

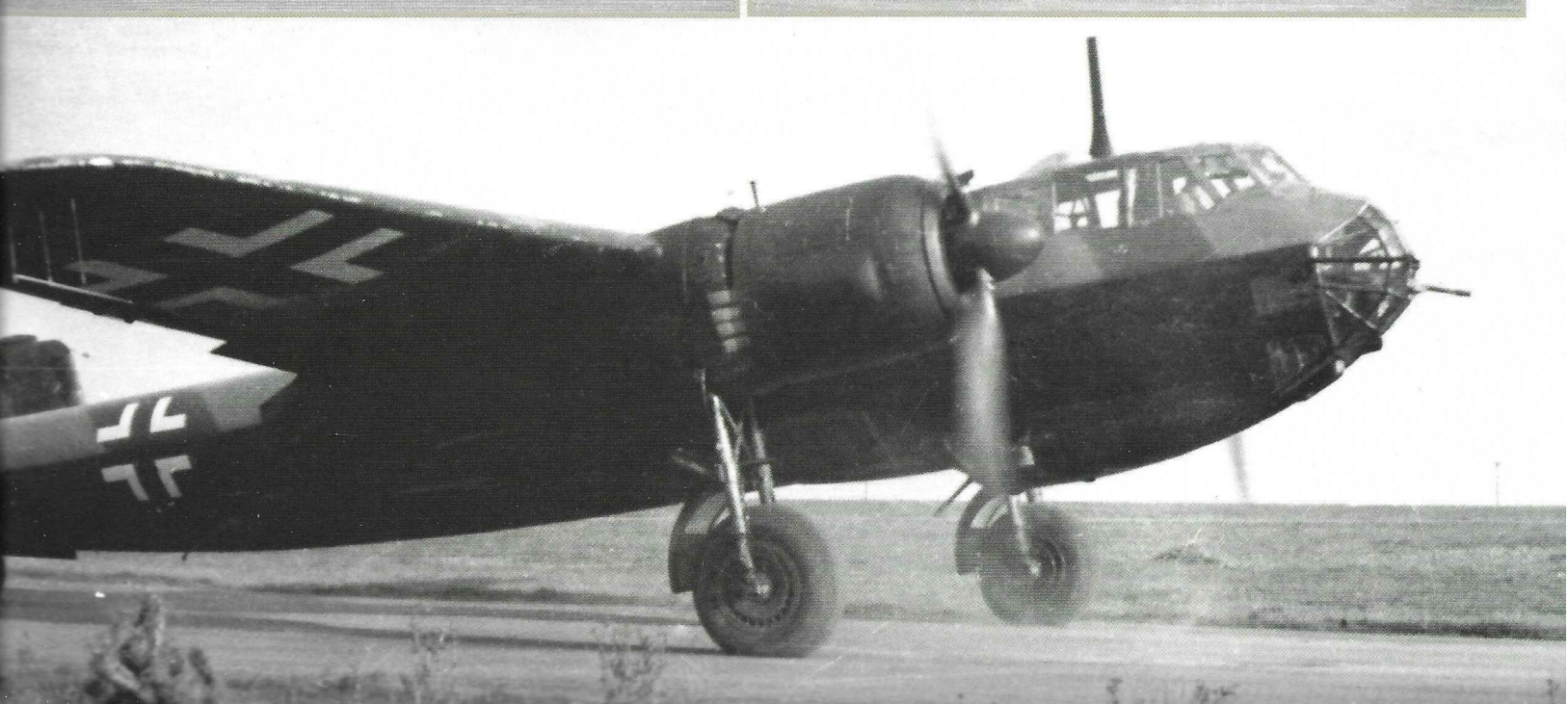
Left and below: The morning after the night before – the crew of Do 217 K-1, W.Nr. 4464, 3E+HZ, contemplate their lucky survival after a heavy landing at Montdidier, 0030 hrs, 26 June 1943, which has severed the rear fuselage aft of the wing trailing edge. Note several parachute packs on the ground next to the roof escape hatch and the fact that the starboard engine was running when the aircraft hit the ground and the five-digit serial '81939' on the starboard engine ring which ducts air into the circular oil cooler behind.

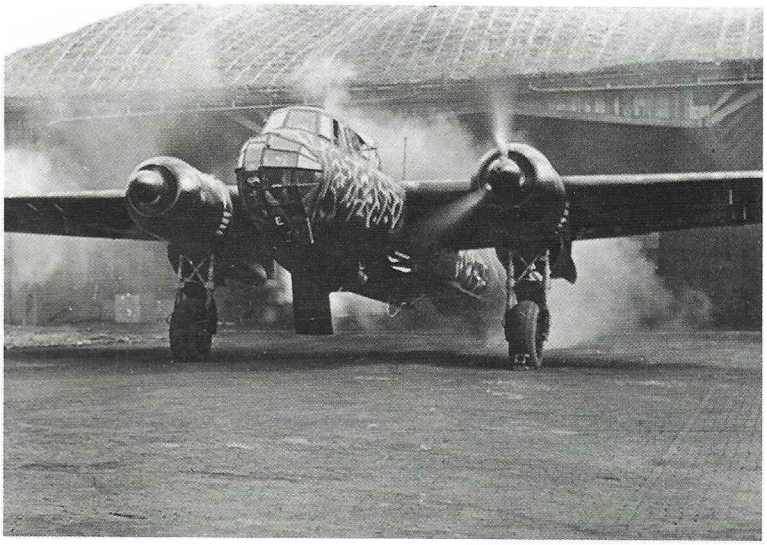
A sequence showing Do 217 E-4, Z6+OH, of 1./KG 66 undergoing what appears to be an engine test, Montdidier 1943. (via Heijkop)









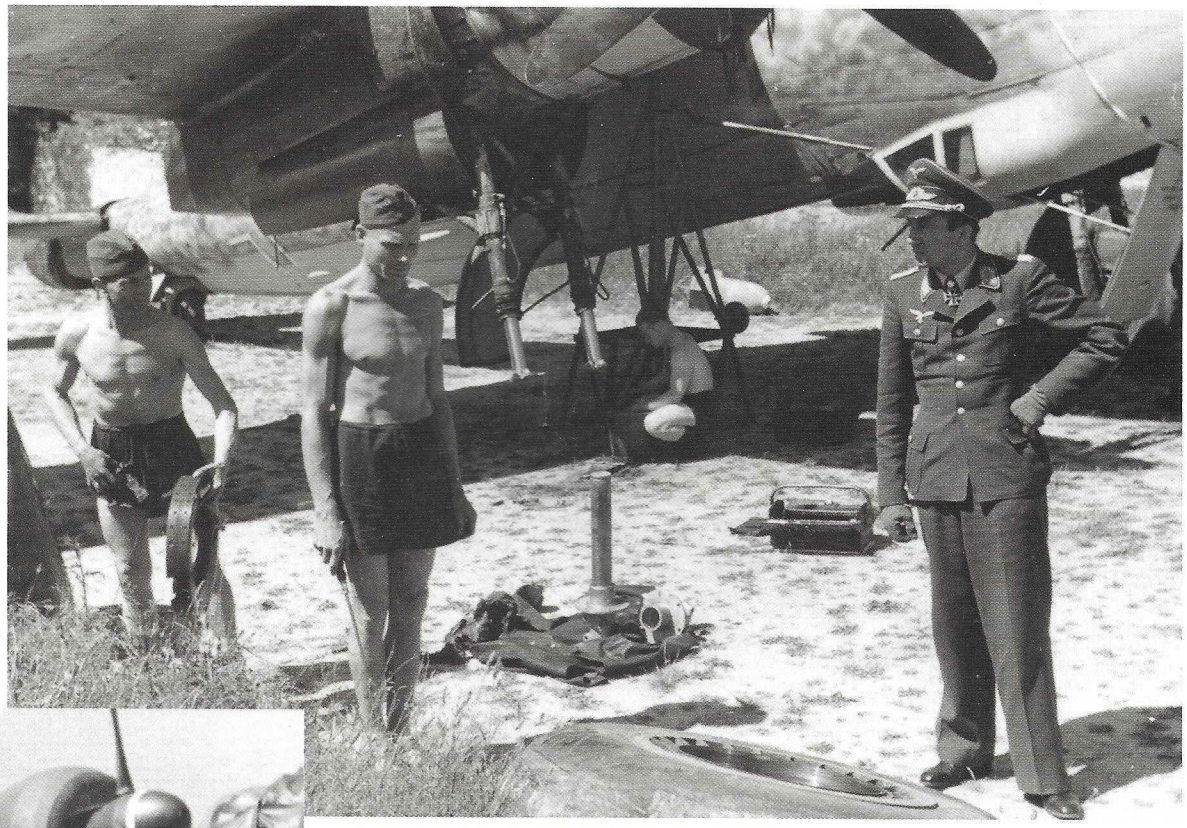


Photographed in October 1943, this Do 217 E-4, coded E, is reputed to be from I./KG 66 but again it has no additional aerial. What are visible are the FuG 216 Neptun R radar aerials under the wings.

Do 217 M-1, W.Nr. 126, Z6+AK, of 2./KG 66, Montdidier, 1943. (via Heijkop)

Initially thought to have been I./KG 66 Do 217 E-4s, the lack of Y-Gerät aerials would indicate otherwise. It is believed that this Mäander pattern camouflage was adopted by II. and III./KG 2 sometime during 1943.

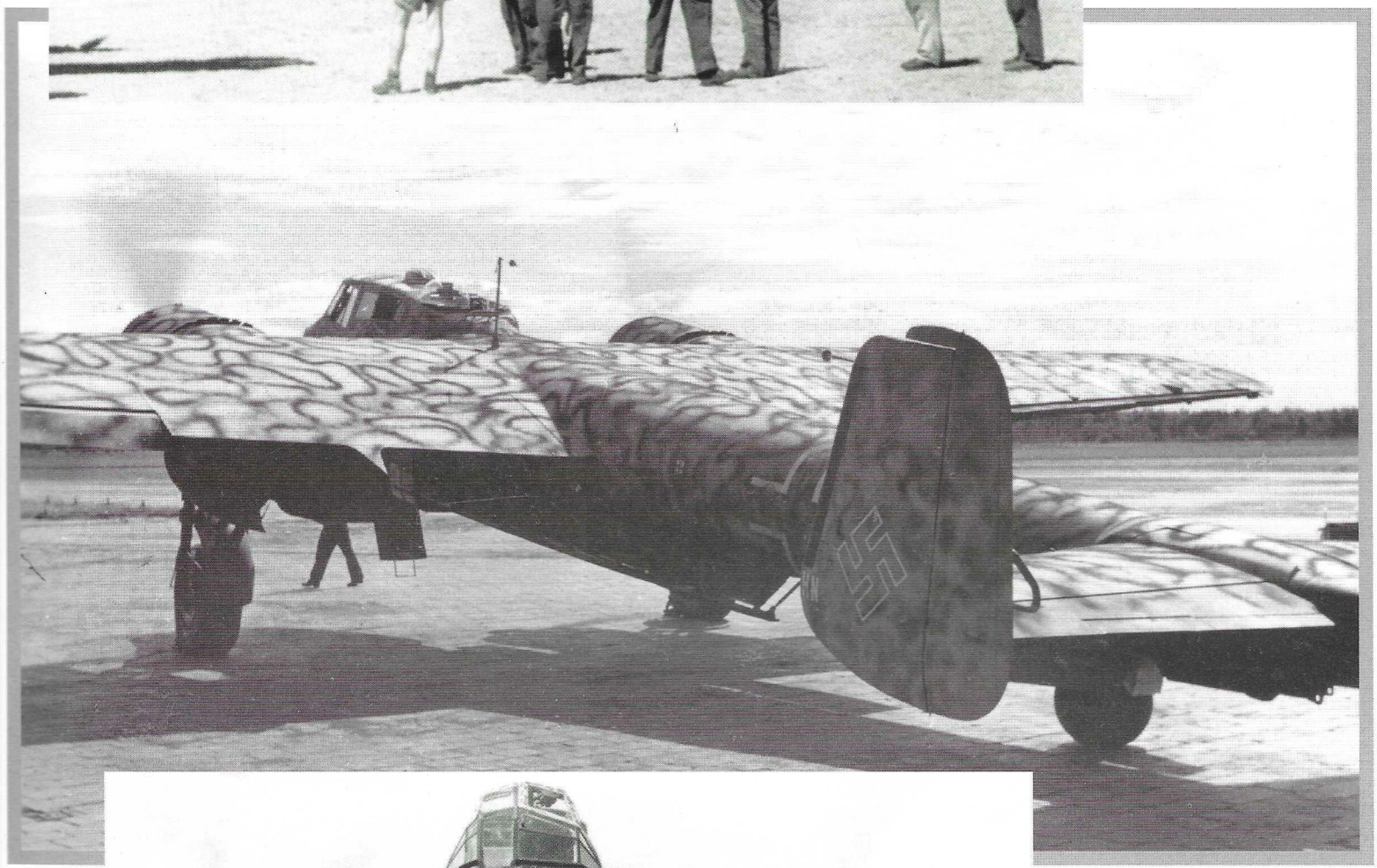
Propaganda photographs showing Maj. Bernhard Jope and ground crew from III./KG 100. Jope was awarded the Eichenlaub in March 1944, by which time he had moved from being Gruppenkommandeur of III./KG 100 to Kommodore of KG 100.

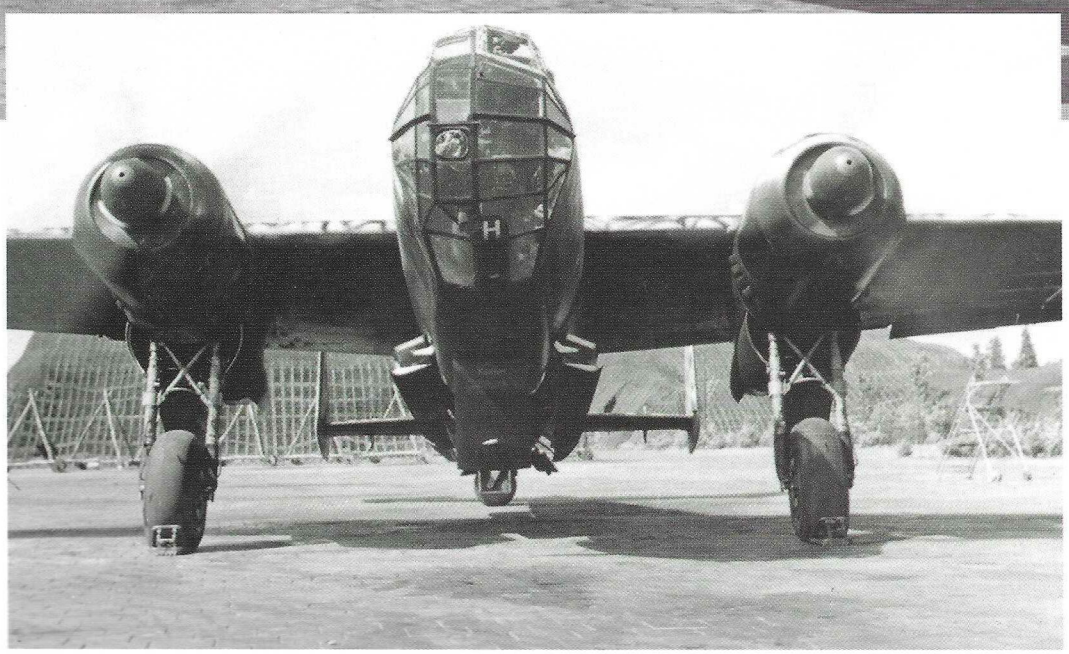


Two further views of Maj. Bernhard Jope and ground crew in the process of changing a tyre.

A Do 217 K-2 of 8./KG 100, Istres, August-September 1943.

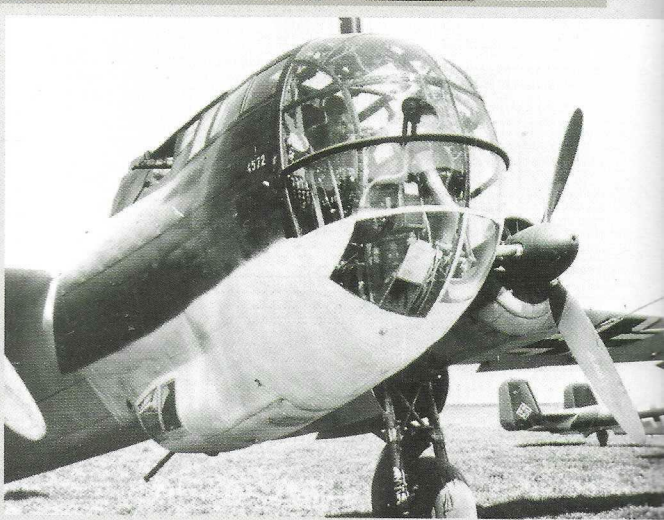
Do 217 K-2s of 7./KG 100, Istres, August-September 1943.





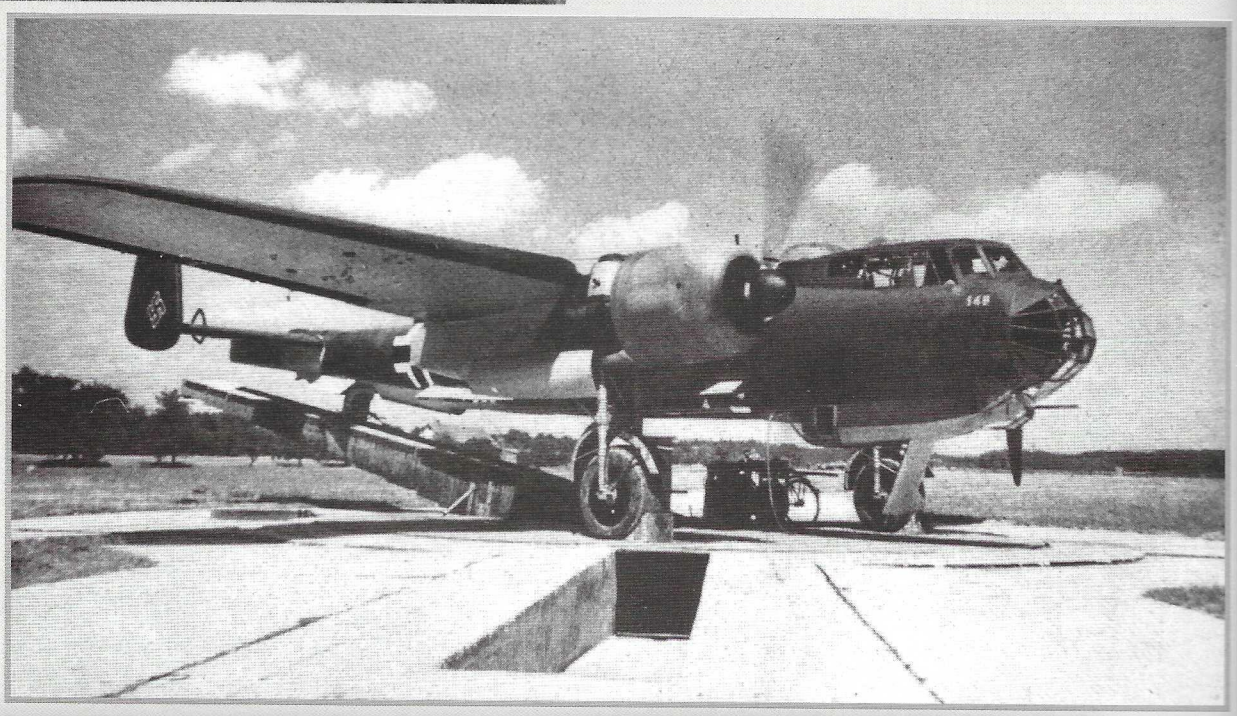
Above and left: These photographs of a Do 217 E-5 coded +HN of 5.Staffel have always been a puzzle. Initially thought to be I./KG 66, this Geschwader did not have a II.Gruppe and the aircraft lacks a Y-Gerät aerial. The camouflage was used by II./KG 100 and a Do 217 E-5, W.Nr. 5631, coded 6N+HN, was lost in the Anzio area on 21 January 1944, but this aircraft does not have the E-5's Kehl bulge in the nose.

Do 217 K-1, W.Nr. 4518, reputed to have been photographed at Bordeaux, this aircraft being intended for Japan. W.Nr. 4519 was reported as being on the strength of II./KG 2 in July 1943.



Do 217 K-2, W.Nr. 4572. This aircraft was reported damaged with 5./KG 100 at Kalamaki on 15 November 1943.

Do 217 M-1 of KG 2 with the crew of Lt. Arendt, the identity of whom has not been ascertained. (via Taghon)



5./KG 100 also lost Do 217 E-4, W.Nr. 1148, at Kalamaki on 15 November 1943, this aircraft being totally destroyed. The aircraft appears to be on a compass-swinging base.

CHAPTER SIX

WITHDRAWN FROM BATTLE 1944-1945

Camera gun still of the attack by Plt Off John McLaughlin of 609 Sqn, Gilze-Rijen, 4 January 1944.

PRIOR to 21 January 1944, the only Do 217 losses in north-west Europe occurred on 4 January 1944 as a result of a return visit to Gilze-Rijen by six Typhoons of 198 Sqn led by Flt Lt 'Bluey' Dall and nine of 609 Sqn led by Sqn Ldr Johnnie Wells – exactly a month after their previous visit. Sgt Jim Fraser-Petherbridge of 198 Sqn claimed the destruction of one Do 217 while Flt Lt Idwal Davies, Fg Off Charles Detal, Fg Off Manu Geerts, Plt Off 'Pinky' Stark and Fg Off Bill Watts of 609 Sqn accounted for another four Do 217s. Plt Off John McLaughlin of 609 Sqn was also credited with two Do 217s and a Ju 88 C destroyed on the ground, while a further Do 217 apparently crashed in a hurry to land which was credited to the squadron mascot, a goat named Gp Capt William de Goat. 198 Sqn wrote of the event:

> 'The sweep split in the neighbourhood of Gilze – 609 going north and running into a batch of Do 217s almost immediately, while 198 turned south and encountered no aircraft but succeeded in damaging sundry tugs and barges on the way. Sgt Fraser-Petherbridge however, who was forced to return home with engine trouble just after the Sqn divided, ran into a lone Do 217 who crossed his path with wheels down in preparation to land. Despite the uncertainty of his engine, he flogged it to the maximum possible speed, overtook the e/a and shot it down in flames on the perimeter of the 'drome he was making for, he himself being forced to break away low over the airfield in face of considerable light Flak. Nevertheless, he survived this and the ensuing 120 miles back to base. Landing with a very sick engine and renewed belief in the age of miracles.'

KG 2 reported the loss of four aircraft with more being destroyed or seriously damaged by strafing. Four aircrew were killed, which included *Oblt.* Otto Schäfer the *Staffelkapitän* of 7./KG 2, and another five were wounded. One of the 609 Sqn aircraft flown by Fg Off Georges Daix crashed into the Channel on the return flight, and the pilot was reported missing; Jim Fraser-Petherbridge would not experience any more miracles as he was shot down and killed by Flak on 20 June 1944.

Pilots of 609 Sqn, late 1943; John McLaughlin is second from right. He force-landed in Holland ten days later but managed to evade capture.

The only other combat loss for the first three weeks of January 1944 was a Do 217 M-1 of 1./*Nachtaufklärungsstaffel* flown by *Lt.* Erhard Fischer which was reported as a result of a mission stated as being to Golta in the Ukraine. However, Do 217 losses would recommence on 21 January 1944.

On 7 December 1943, *Dr.* Josef Goebbels, the Reich Minister for Propaganda, wrote:

> 'Göring has now gone west to prepare the reprisal attacks against England. For this we need about 200 heavy four-engined aircraft which will in one night fly to England twice and deliver a massive blow against the capital. Of course, we cannot carry out an attack like this often enough but it should serve as a reminder to the English that we are still around.'

This statement arose from a conference held at the end of the previous month in which *Reichsmarschall* Hermann Göring had decreed that 'Operation *Steinbock*', a major bombing campaign against London, would commence in two weeks' time. It was not until the night of 21 January 1944 that the first of two major attacks that night was launched.

The British were aware that something was afoot when signal intercepts revealed the movement of Luftwaffe bomber units from Italy to bases in France and Belgium. Further activity at German airbases in the afternoon of 21 January 1944 clearly showed that *Steinbock* or the 'Baby Blitz', as it became known, was about to start.

The Luftwaffe had thirty-five Do 217s, twenty Me 410s, twenty Fw 190s, thirty He 177s and 170 Ju 88/188s available to them for the first night of *Steinbock*. It was clear from these numbers that by now the Do 217 was being eclipsed by the latest Ju 88s and the Ju 188.

Two waves of attack were flown that night and an incredible sixteen Ju 88s, two Ju 188s, eight He 177s, one Fw 190, one Me 410 and four Do 217s were lost either to British defences or in crashing to or from the target. Claims that night by nightfighters were for three Ju 88s, two He 177s and one Fw 190 destroyed and the only claim for a Do 217 was filed by Flt Lt John Hall of 488 Sqn during the first wave. This was probably the Do 217 M-1 of 1./KG 2 flown by *Lt.* Horst Anders which came down in the sea 13 miles south of Dungeness at 2210 hrs on the return flight, which matches John Hall's claim well in time and location. One Do 217 M-1 of 2./KG 2 came down on land in the grounds of Runwell Mental Hospital at Wickford in Essex. Caught by a searchlight over Wickford, the pilot dived down the beam which went out, but while banking to resume its run toward London it was hit by radar predicted anti-aircraft fire coming from Pitsea. With one engine and wing ablaze, it was seen flying low over the hospital after which it hit a line of trees, crashed and exploded. *Lt.* Erich Reiser and his crew were all buried in a collective grave, such was the destruction. It is possible that another six Do 217s were lost that night over France but with no crew casualties, records do not exist.

As a result of losses and due to bad weather, just one more attack was flown on the night of 29 January which saw a further twelve Ju 88s, two Ju 188s and a single He 177 and Do 217 M-1 of 9./KG 2 lost. Again, it is possible that another three Do 217s were lost over France without crew casualties. In human terms, Do 217 aircrew casualties for the first two nights of *Steinbock* cost KG 2 twenty-two killed and two captured. It was clear that the result of poor training, poor equipment and the superiority of British defences were bleeding the German bomber units dry. This was further made harder for the Luftwaffe bomber crews with the withdrawal of about 100 bombers back to Italy following the Allied landing at Anzio on 22 January 1944. It was clear that the forces now left to carry out an effective campaign were not enough to make any difference.

Following the Allied landing at Anzio and Nettuno, the only Do 217 combat unit available in the region was *Stab* and II./KG 100 operating with the Hs 293 from Toulouse. The 8. and 9./KG 100 had moved to Eggebek on the German/Danish border in October 1943 and it was believed that from there they would train to carry out an attack on Scapa Flow, something that never happened. The 7./KG 100 was in the process of converting to the He 177 and a new 7.*Staffel*, predominantly flying the newer and improved Do 217 M-11, would not rejoin III./KG 100 until later in 1944. II./KG 100 was also joined at Anzio by He 177s of *Maj.* Walter Rieder's II./KG 40 which were also armed with Hs 293s.

II./KG 100's first successes came on the late afternoon of 23 January 1944. The *Gruppe* had moved to Bergamo in northern Italy from Toulouse-Blagnac and launched five Do 217 E-5s each with a single Hs 293 to attack shipping off Anzio. The destroyer HMS *Janus* was sunk by an Hs 293 and, shortly after, another hit HMS *Jervis* in the forward hull, the explosion tearing off the entire bow back to the ninth bulkhead. Amazingly, *Jervis* suffered no casualties and remained afloat, albeit badly damaged and, although 80 crew were rescued from the *Janus*, at least 161 – which included her captain, Lt Cdr William Morrison – were killed. The only casualty suffered by II./KG 100 that day was when the Do 217 E-5 flown by *Hptm.* Hans Eberthäuser of *Stab* II.*Gruppe* crashed on take-off from Toulouse with Eberthäuser and his three crew injured.

II./KG 40 and II./KG 100 returned the following evening. The destroyer USS *Plunkett* managed to avoid two Hs 293 before being hit by a 250-kg bomb, but then the hospital ship *St David* was apparently hit by an Hs 293 and possibly the same fate occurred to the USS *Mayo*. However, which unit was responsible and whether the sinkings or damage were caused by glide or conventional bombs is confusing. II./KG 100 lost three aircraft, one each from 4., 5. and 6.*Staffeln*. *Ofw.* Herbert Wollny of 4./KG 100 was reported to have been shot down by a fighter and crashed near Piasa, while *Lt.* Helmut Grotzer of 5.*Staffel* and *Lt.* Hans-Werner Koch were reported missing. Just one claim was filed by the RAF for a Do 217 when a Beaufighter of 255 Sqn flown by Fg Off David Giles made a claim at 1745 hrs south of Rome. However, on the American side, Spitfires of the 2nd Fighter Sqn (FS)/52nd Fighter Group (FG) engaged Do 217s at 1635 hrs in the Pisa area with 2/Lt Clyde Cleveland and 2/Lt Arthur Johnson Jr claiming two destroyed and 1/Lt Harvey Scheu one damaged. It would appear that the Americans did not get off lightly as a crew from *Stab* II./KG 100 claimed to have shot down a Spitfire at 1645 hrs and another crew from 5./KG 100 got another one five minutes later. The Spitfire flown by 1/Lt Harry Schellhase was seen to explode while at 1643 hrs, immediately after his victory, 2/Lt Clyde Cleveland reported engine trouble and bailed out. Schellhase was reported killed while Cleveland was captured.

Ofw. Karl Ballermann of 6./KG 100 recorded damaging a 7,000 BRT freighter off Anzio 26 January 1944, operating from Istres between 1445 and 2005 hrs and it is believed that the next mission was not flown by II./KG 100 until 29 January 1944 – an expected attack two days before was postponed due to an air attack on the forward base of Istres. Six aircraft took part in the attack on the evening of 29 January-*Ofw.* Ballermann again recording taking off from Istres at 1445 hrs and landing at 2015 hrs; *Uffz.* Paul Hoffmann of 4./KG 100 was the *Beobachter* in *Lt.* Dr Franz Lutz's crew. He wrote the following account:

> 'By the time we approached the target area, all hell had broken loose. Ships' Flak guns were putting up an unexpectedly heavy barrage over the landing zone. At 1800 hrs we began our attack run from the land side through the middle of this hellish barrage. Our height was 3000 m – we later learned that other crews had made their attack from over the sea to avoid flying through the Flak. After release, the *Beobachters* in the aircraft guided their

bombs towards the densest concentration of Flak. As a result, several missiles struck the British cruiser HMS *Spartan* which was anchored near the harbour and sank it. We ourselves came through the inferno and finally caught sight of the sea. There were flashes everywhere in the falling darkness as the ships greeted us with Flak. *Lt. Dr.* Lutz descended the aircraft to 2,000 m. I assumed control in a 30-degree turn and placed the missile on target. 143 seconds after launch and 116 seconds after I had taken control, the Hs 293 struck the target amidships just above the waterline. It was now time for us to set course for home and quickly. We had a jettisonable fuel tank under our port wing but it was not functioning – in the dim light we could not tell if one of the lines had been damaged. Several instruments had also become unserviceable.'

This crew was credited with sinking a 6,000-ton freighter off Nettuno at 1801 hrs as did *Ofw.* Karl Ballermann. Their victim was probably the 7,181 GRT Liberty ship *Samuel Huntingdon* which was anchored just off the beach, laden with cargo which included ammunition and canned fuel. Her boiler room was penetrated after which the Hs 293 exploded killing four crew and blowing out two of her cargo hatches. With no power, the order to abandon ship was given up and 15 minutes later a second explosion meant the ship sank, albeit in shallow water. Well ablaze, the next morning the flames reached the canned fuel and the third explosion totally destroyed what was left of the ship.

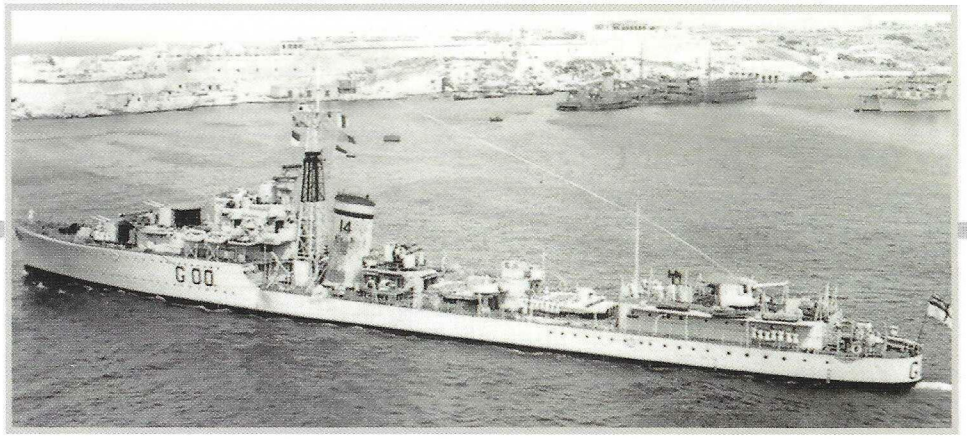
The loss of the *Dido* Class light cruiser HMS *Spartan* was also serious and spectacular. A single Hs 293 hit her just aft of the rear funnel and then exploded, blowing a large hole in the upper deck. The mast collapsed, the boiler rooms flooded, steam and electrical power failed, after which a fire broke out and the ship began to heel over to port and then sink. An hour after being hit, Capt Patrick McLaughlin gave the order to abandon ship and ten minutes after that she settled in 30 feet of water. Five officers and 41 enlisted men were killed or missing and another 42 were wounded.

What happened was submitted in a 'Most Secret' report to the Admiralty:

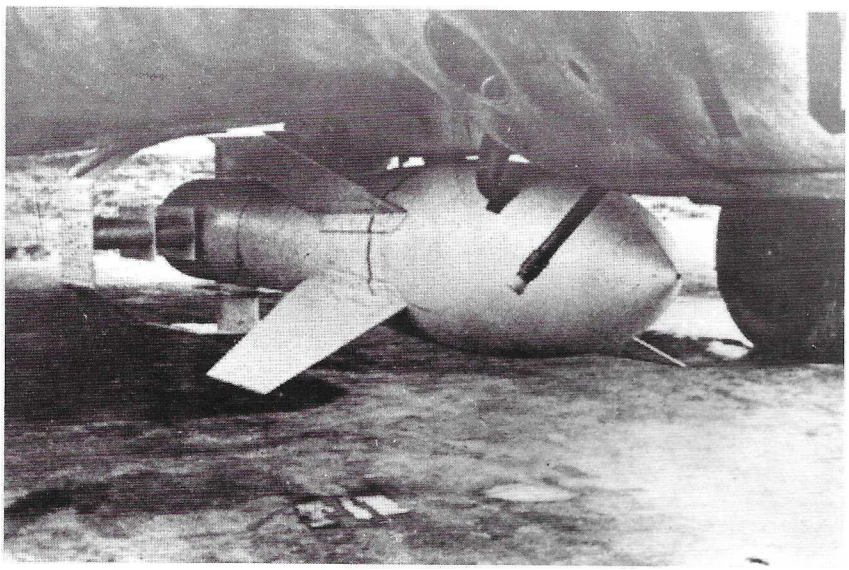
Uffz. Paul Hoffmann (observer) and Lt. Dr. Franz Lutz of 4./KG 100, seen here in the cockpit of a He 177. (via Urbanke)

'At the time of the attack, *Spartan* was anchored in Anzio Bay. *Dido, Delhi* and *Laforey* were under way. Smoke had been ordered in anchorage but was not fully effective owing to short time in operation and strong breeze. *Spartan* was making smoke from bow and stern but was not herself covered.

'Approximately 18 aircraft detected by *Ulster Queen* [Fighter Direction Ship] and shore radar approaching from the north. These circled over land 20 miles northward and beam attack was delivered from the landward side, ships being silhouetted against afterglow. Lining of attack prohibited aircraft from being sighted except by a few witnesses. *Spartan* and one merchant vessel hit.



Right: The destroyer HMS Jervis *was badly damaged by an Hs 293 from II./KG 100 on 23 January 1944; during the same engagement HMS* Janus *(below) was sunk by an Hs 293.*



Fritz X seen here loaded beneath a He 177 A-5.

'Not more than six bombs seen to fall in anchorage. Fire opened by ships in general direction of aircraft as soon as sighting reports were made. This was same time as bombs were seen approaching. Barrage fire and range fire set to burst at 5,000 yds were used. Shore batteries also opened fire after bombs were released. USS [*Herbert C] Jones* and USS [*Frederick C] Davis* [Hs 293 jamming ships] present and reported 14 signals detected, some of which were jammed.'

The report concluded by stating:

'Only new features are exceptional accuracy of timing so that parent aircraft were scarcely visible and general use of red lights on bombs.'

Just one aircraft was reported lost during the attack when *Lt.* Rohr of 4./KG 100 was shot down by a nightfighter near Ostia on the coast south-west of Rome, two of his crew being killed, while Rohr and his *Bordmechaniker* remained unhurt. The only claims that night for Do 217s were made by Flt Lt Raleigh Hilken and his Nav/Rad, Fg Off James Ritchie flying a Beaufighter of 600 Sqn. The combat report reads as follows:

'1755 hrs Anzio area: Visual and contact obtained simultaneously at 12,000 ft range on four Do 217s flying in a southerly direction at 13,000 ft. Decided to attack aircraft second from right. Starboard e/a then turned off starboard and at same time target aircraft opened fire from approx. 2,000 ft range. The three e/a next turned port and outside port aircraft dived steeply away. The outer starboard e/a which had previously turned away had now turned onto Beaufighter's tail. The remaining two Do 217s followed each other round in a defensive circle firing at Beaufighter from 1,000 ft range without however receiving strikes. Dorniers then dived down to the beaches and visual and contact were lost.

'1759 hrs NW Anzio: Immediately after visual and simultaneous contact were obtained on aircraft identified as a Do 217 at 6,000 ft range above and dead ahead flying on a northerly course. Climbed to 9,000 ft and closed in experiencing return fire. From 500 ft dead astern fired four bursts on e/a now turning and diving to starboard. Strikes were observed on fuselage and starboard wing. E/a turned violently to starboard almost on its back and dived steeply. Contact rapidly disappeared. 20 miles north of Anzio.

'1807 hrs 15 miles NNW Anzio: Project [ground control] gave vector 303 and at same time contact was obtained followed immediately by visual on a/c to port and above identified as Do 217. Closed 300 IAS and attacked from starboard and below firing one-second burst. Range closed from 400 feet. Strikes were seen on top of fuselage and port wing. Port wing was seen to crumple up section outboard of engine at right angles. Another one-second burst was fired from 100 yds dead astern resulting in strikes on fuselage. E/a turned violently to starboard and dived to the ground where it exploded with a blinding flash.'

The pilot was credited with one enemy aircraft destroyed and one damaged, the latter being upgraded to destroyed following confirmation from the radar unit 871 AMES. Hilken also noted that the Do 217s were carrying what looked like long-range tanks.

II./KG 100 had been quite successful off Anzio and Nettuno for relatively light losses. The same could not be said of II./KG 40 which lost seven aircraft on 23 January 1944 and then appears to have played a minimal part with Hs 293 operations for the remainder of the month.

Activity for February 1944 was slow to start, albeit 4./KG 40 lost a He 177 on 1 February and 6./KG 100 lost an aircraft flown by *Lt.* Helmut Breutzmann on 6 February. This aircraft apparently crashed at Monterotondo north-east of Rome, probably another victim of Flt Lt Raleigh Hilken who got a Do 217 at 0405 hrs twenty miles north of Rome. The German pilot was killed and the three remaining crew wounded. *Ofw.* Karl Ballermann of 6./KG 100 recorded attacking a convoy off Cap Tenes, operating from Istres between 1535 hrs and 2125 hrs, but cloud prevented them from locating the target.

In mid-February 1944, 8. and 9./KG 100 moved from Eggebek to Toulouse-Francazal, 7./KG 100 moving to Fassberg to start converting to the He 177. This move could have been a big boost to German anti-shipping operations in the Mediterranean, but all that the Do 217 crews did was to make training flights and their first mission with *Fritz* X would not be until the end of April 1944.

Ofw. Karl Ballermann of 6./KG 100 reported a failed attack on 6 February 1944 operating from Bergamo between 0147 hrs and 0558 hrs and it appears that the next successful attack by II./KG 100 came on the evening of 15 February 1944 when their Hs 293s sank the 7,176 GRT Liberty ship *Elihu Yale*. *Lt.* Werner Kirstenpfad of 8./KG 100 was also credited with damaging a destroyer off Nettuno at 1808 hrs that night. This was believed to be the Hs 293 jamming ship USS *Herbert C Jones*. Although bracketed by bombs, it suffered no damage. Again, Karl Ballermann was operating that evening and was credited with damaging a 5,000 BRT south of Nettuno However, the following day saw a serious loss. *Hptm.* Heinz-Emil Middermann, *Kommandeur* of II./KG 100, was returning to Toulouse from Bergamo when his aircraft suffered an engine failure and, in attempting to crash-land, its wing tip hit the ground and it crashed at Gambolo, south-east of Novarra, killing him and five on the aircraft, who included *Oblt.* Werner Eckert and *Oblt.* Dietrich Schreiber – II./KG 100's communications and operations officers respectively. It is believed that Middermann was replaced by *Maj.* Bodo Meyerhofer, who would be killed in an accident flying a He 177 on 14 May 1944, II./KG 100 by that time converting to the Heinkel.

Attacks from now on were infrequent and generally ineffective. An attack on 19 February 1944 saw two near misses, but the Do 217 E-5 flown by *Oblt.* Wolf Hinze of *Stab* II./KG 100 hit a mountain near Como on the way back, and all of the crew were killed. Then the penultimate attack on 25 February saw the sinking of the destroyer HMS *Inglefield* which cost the lives of 35 officers and men, although another 157 were rescued. *Ofw.* Karl Ballermann of II./KG 100 was again operating on this mission but suffered an engine failure and force-landed two hours after take-off at Castiglione del Lago on the south-west corner of Lake Trasimeno. The sinking of the *Inglefield* was the last success by II./KG 100 off Anzio; apparently one more mission would take place without success. In a month, operations off Anzio cost II./KG 100 nine Do 217 E-5s due to enemy action while accidents caused the deaths of 29 experienced aircrew and another 12 wounded or injured. With production of the Do 217 having ceased the previous year, these losses would be impossible to replace.

As *Steinbock* continued, small-scale attacks took place on five nights during the first two weeks of February, followed by more successful attacks using larger calibre bombs on the nights of 18, 20, 22, 23 and 24 February 1944. However, losses during the month were heavy with at least thirteen Do 217s lost or badly damaged involving the death of 27 aircrew and nine taken prisoner. Added to the Ju 188s also lost by II. *Gruppe* during the month, KG 2 was struggling to remain fully operational against ever-improving British defences.

There were two losses of note in February 1944 which were different to some of those which had occurred over Britain. On 12 February 1944, a Do 217 M-1 of 3./KG 2 was shot down at Josselin in southern Brittany not far from the airfield at Gael. What it was doing there and in daylight is not known, but in addition to crew, it was carrying two ground crew and was en route to Eindhoven. Sqn Ldr Geoff Warnes DSO DFC of 263 Sqn explained what happened:

> 'I was leading the squadron at zero feet in loose line abreast with myself to port. At 1457 hrs we were flying east about five miles south of Gael airfield when I saw a Do 217 approaching to port at about 150 ft. I called my section to follow and turned toward the e/a which turned away from me to the north, then to the east and south. The e/a took evasive action in gentle turns at zero feet at more than 300 IAS. I fired short bursts at various ranges and deflection. At first I got strikes only on the wing. Then a dull glow appeared in the centre section and the e/a pulled sharply to 1,000 ft. I closed to 200 yds and fired a long burst into it which made pieces fly off. I saw the crew of six bail out. Their parachutes opened as they left the e/a. The e/a then crashed with a remarkably large explosion. There was return fire from the dorsal position of the e/a. One explosive shell entered the leading edge of my starboard tailplane, causing minor damage.'

HMS Inglefield *was sunk by an Hs 293 on 25 February 1944.*

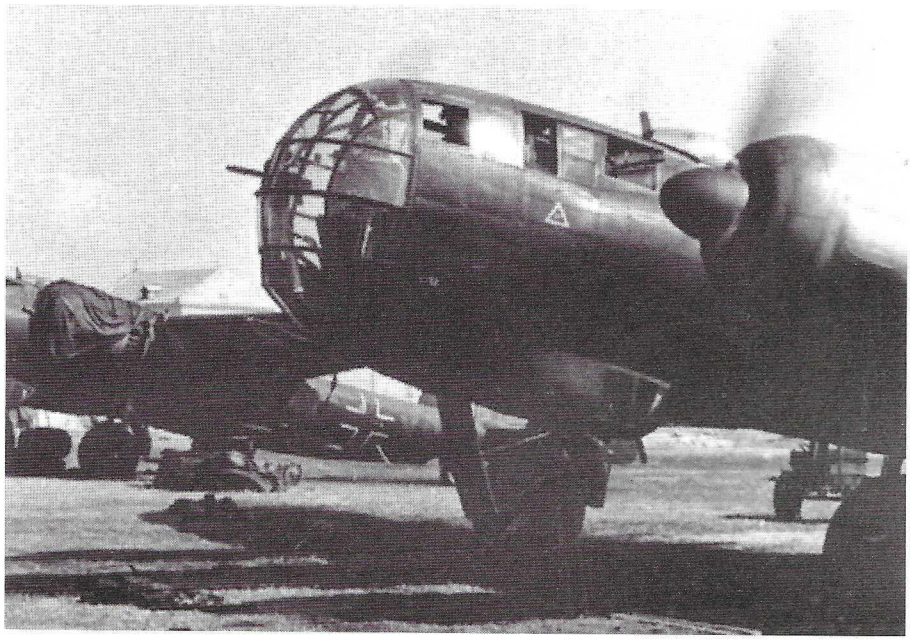
The pilot, *Beobachter* and *Bordfunker* bailed out uninjured and hence their names are unknown. The gunner and one of the ground crew were wounded, but another ground crew-member, *Uffz.* Bruno Fiedler, was killed. Ten days later and on a similar mission, Geoff Warnes's Typhoon suffered engine failure and ditched off Guernsey. Seeing him in difficulty, Fg Off Bob Tuff bailed out to help him but sadly both were never seen alive again.

The second notable loss was on the night of 23 February 1944 and presented the RAF with an almost immaculate Do 217 M-1. The target that night was London and involved all of KG 2, KG 6, KG 54, KG 66 and I./KG 100. For the 13 aircraft of I./KG 2, the target was Millwall Docks which was to be attacked at 4,000 m altitude between 2230 and 2243 hrs, all aircraft but one carrying a single AB 1000 and two AB 500 incendiary containers. *Ofw.* Hermann Stemann of 2./KG 2 was one of the pilots flying that night. He got airborne from Melun-Villaroche at 2020 hrs with at least three other aircraft ahead of him, flew towards St Valery en Caux where he crossed the French coast and then crossed the English coast at Eastbourne before heading towards London. However, when over the north-west suburbs of the capital, his bomber was picked up by searchlights and it then became the target of a highly effective box barrage by anti-aircraft guns. So tremendous was the barrage that it apparently caused panic amongst the crew who thought their bomber had been hit in the starboard engine, wing and cockpit. Hermann Stemann gave the order to bail out and set the Do 217 on autopilot before bailing out himself. All four crew were captured, none the worse for wear, in the Wembley area. Meanwhile the crewless Do 217, W.Nr. 56051, U5+DK, continued on its way north-east, losing height gradually.

At Cambridge, Michael J.F. Bowyer, who would become a renowned aviation author and historian after the war, wrote of that night:

> 'Sirens sounded in Cambridge at 2230 hrs and, already recording at my usual vantage point, I noted in my diary two red flares south-south-west, red shell bursts, three

Below: Sqn Ldr Geoff Warnes of 263 Sqn seen here in the cockpit of a Westland Whirlwind, 1943.



Do 217 M-1s of 4./Nachtaufklärungsstaffel, 1944. The furthest aircraft is coded K7+XM, minus its port propeller with the BMW engine under a tarpaulin. (via Davis)

Wg Cdr Richard Gayner, seen here, right, as a Squadron Leader in 1943, with Fg Off Trevor Williams.

large explosions, many incendiary loads south before siren. Just before the All Clear there came an incredibly quiet, low-flying Lancaster going north-east over town. The sound disappeared in the Chesterton direction. I noted it and gave no more thought. By dawn the news spread throughout the town that a Dornier had come down last night on allotments close to St George's Church, Chesterton. It had by inches missed the roof of the Chesterton Institution to belly land in the extreme north-east corner of the open ground.'

No other aircraft were lost this night and of those 12 other pilots or aircraft captains from I./KG 2 flying with *Ofw.* Hans Stemann that night, Fw. Werner Speiring (3./KG 2) was taken prisoner the following night and *Lt.* Walter Kuttler (3./KG 2) was also killed the same night; *Lt.* Josef Ott (3./KG 2) was killed 15 March 1944; *Uffz.* Hans Jakob (2./KG 2) was killed 19 March 1944; *Fw.* Möbius (3./KG 2) was killed 28 June 1944; *Lt.* Hans Böttger (2./KG 2) was killed 29 June 1944; *Ofw.* Klaus Jäger (3./KG 2) was wounded 19 April 1944; *Lt.* Roderich von Parpart (3./KG 2) was wounded 30 July 1944; and *Fw.* Karl Küster (*Stab* I./KG 2) was killed 19 August 1944. Not a very good survival rate. With such continued heavy losses across all *Geschwader, Steinbock* began to fizzle out and for the next three months the Luftwaffe could do little apart from preparing for the inevitable Allied invasion with a much depleted bomber force, of which the Do 217, now operated only by I. and III./KG 2 and III./KG 100, was available in very limited numbers, not helped by I./KG 2 starting to convert to the Ju 188 at the end of March 1944.

Away from the Mediterranean and north-west Europe, Do 217 operations were very few and far between. The Do 217 J nightfighter had by now been all but replaced by the Do 217 N, the J being used more predominantly by the training unit NJG 101. Even then, the numbers of Do 217 nightfighters were way below the numbers of Bf 110 and Ju 88s being used by the nightfighter force. However, NJG 4, NJG 100 and 4./NJG 200 still used the Do 217 N in ever decreasing numbers, with NJG 4 stopping use of the N in June 1944, NJG 100 stopping by October 1944, and 4./NJG 200 stopping by May 1944. Accounts of combats with Do 217 nightfighters are rare but on 24 February 1944, Lancaster LM419 coded PG-N of 619 Sqn was one. The Lancaster, flown by Fg Off Keith Williams, took off from RAF Coningsby at 2008 hrs headed for Schweinfurt. The flight was uneventful for the first few hours but as the bomber approached the town of Calw, west of Stuttgart, hell broke loose. *Oblt.* Wilhelm Welk of 5./NJG 101 had taken off from München-Riem and was vectored onto a target and at 2250 hrs he opened fire on a bomber observing hits on the port wing. In the Lancaster, there was no warning at all. The first that navigator Fg Off Charles Clarke knew was that the port wing had been hit and he immediately headed for the escape hatch in the nose, opened it ready for the others and sat there as he knew that the Lancaster had been mortally hit. Shortly after, the port wing broke off and he dropped out into the darkness. It is thought that the pilot stayed at the controls but the Lancaster soon crashed between Oberkollwangen and Schmieh, just south-west of Calw, killing the pilot and two other crew-members.

The *Nachtaufklärungsstaffeln* were still using the Do 217 but, again, in decreasing numbers. For example, 3./*Nachtaufklärungsstaffel* was taken off operations in May 1944 pending being re-equipped with the Arado 234, after which it would be renamed 1.(F)/123.

From March 1944 onwards, the only Do 217 E-5-equipped *Staffeln* to remain operational in the Mediterranean were *Hptm.* Heinz Vorpahl's 5./KG 100 and *Hptm.* Willi Scholl's 6./KG 100, the former remaining in southern France until at least the end of April 1944 after which it would join *Hptm.* Georg Gaile's 4./KG 100, now in the process of converting to the He 177.

The Do 217 E-5s would now join with KG 26 and KG 77 in attacking convoys in the Mediterranean. On 8 March 1944, the target was convoy KMS-43 named 'Hannah' and although no ships were sunk, 6./KG 100 lost the Do 217 E-5 flown by *Lt.* Kurt Osterwald, one of a number of aircraft lost that evening. 153 Sqn scrambled three Beaufighters from Reghia led by former Battle of Britain pilot Wg Cdr Richard Gayner, to patrol north of the convoy which was north-west of Algiers, while another two aircraft patrolled over the convoy itself. 153 Sqn claimed four aircraft destroyed, three probably destroyed and one damaged, but the only Do 217 claim was made by Gayner and his Nav/Rad Plt Off John Blair:

> 'After vector, two vics of three aircraft seen identified as He 111s but were too far on port beam for head-on attack. On turn sighted Ju 88 and gave it a three second burst but engine cut and contact was lost. After several vectors a Do 217 was identified and contact obtained. After two bursts strikes seen in centre section and fuselage and fire broke out and soon after crashed in the sea.'

153 Sqn did not get off scot-free – Flt Sgt Alan Applegate and Flt Sgt John Marshall were shot down and killed by a Ju 88 C-6 fighter from 2./ZG 1, this German unit losing two aircraft in return, a third aircraft crashing after apparently colliding with a crane in Marseille harbour. On what would be his last mission with the Do 217, *Ofw.* Karl Ballermann of 6./KG 100 took off from Istres at 1614 hrs on this date to attack a convoy north of Algiers and landed again at 2155 hrs having failed to find any targets due to the weather.

The next attack was against convoy 'Illicit' on 19 March 1944 and, again, no damage was caused. Such was the case of the attack on convoy 'Thumbs Up' on 29 March 1944 – no damage, but 153 Sqn again caused trouble for the Luftwaffe. In between 2115 and 2245 hrs, the squadron

scrambled 10 Beaufighters. Flt Sgt Peter Ashwell and Sgt Frank Hydes claimed one Do 217 and Flt Sgt John Chad and Flt Sgt Maurice Henstock another – both Do 217s went into the sea in flames. III./KG 100 reported the loss of three aircraft flown by *Uffz.* Herbert Grzeschik of *Stab* II./KG 100, *Fw.* Konrad Grabert of 5./KG 100 and *Lt.* Gerhard Bilkenroth of 6./KG 100. This time there were survivors – *Uffz.* Raphael Bodewig (gunner) from *Stab* II./KG 100 was captured while *Fw.* Konrad Grabert and *Ogefr.* Hans Schulz from 5./KG 100 were interned in Spain.

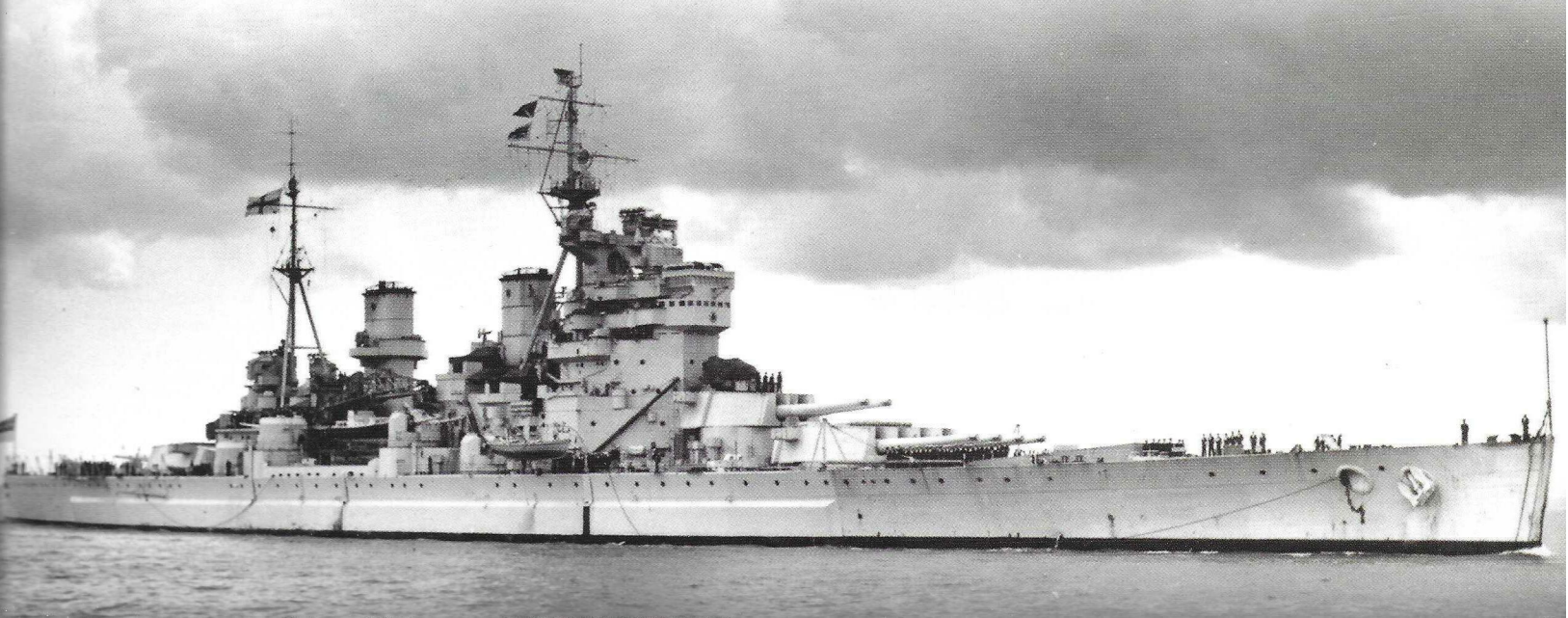
Another interesting loss occurred on 16 March 1944 when a Do 217 K-3 of *Erprobungskommando* 36 was reported shot down by fighters near Öttingen, with pilot *Oblt.* Harald Englisch and *Stfw.* Hermann Grothaus killed. 1/Lt William C Reese of 364th FS reported shooting down a Do 217 near Augsburg at 1155 hrs that day, Öttingen being 65 km south of Augsburg.

Meanwhile, back in north-west Europe, March 1944 saw four major attacks on London as well as Hull on the night of 19 March and then, on 27-28 March, a disastrous attack on Bristol. Both the Hull and, especially, Bristol attacks were farcical. Bombs were scattered all around Hull and the surrounding counties for the loss of a Ju 188 flown by the pathfinder leader *Hptm.* Walter Schmitt of 2./KG 66; a He 177; two Do 217 M-1s from 2. and 7./KG 2 flown by *Uffz.* Hans Jakob and *Uffz.* Johann Glombitza respectively, (the former to Fg Off Robert Barbour of 264 Sqn and crashing at Legbourne in Lincolnshire, the latter probably to Flt Lt Douglas Greaves of 25 Sqn off Cromer); and five Ju 88s. During the Bristol attack eight days later, no bombs fell on Bristol but again the losses were high – three Ju 188s, two Do 217s from III./KG 2, one of which was flown by *Fw.* Emil Krings of 7.*Staffel*, and nine Ju 88s. The month had seen the loss of at least fourteen Do 217s with another four from III./KG 2 being destroyed on the ground by P-47s of the 354th FS/355th FG, which strafed the airfield at Achmer on 8 March 1944. Released from escorting B-17s attacking targets in Berlin, one flight led by Lt Curtiss Brown claimed to have destroyed seven aircraft at the airfield. In terms of aircrew casualties, 32 men were killed, one captured and five wounded during the month: accidents, British defences and Allied air superiority were simply erasing Luftwaffe bombers and their crews.

Hardly a sortie was flown for the first two weeks of April 1944, and when they were, losses always occurred. The bombing of Achmer on the afternoon of 8 April 1944 resulted in the total loss of at least nine Do 217s from III./KG 2, which would seriously restrict the *Gruppe's* operations over the coming months. The first major attack did not occur until the night of 18 April 1944 and again saw the loss of a single Do 217 M-1 flown by *Lt.* Klaus Jäger of 7./KG 2 (formerly of 3./KG 2) probably damaged by Fg Off Bernard Travers of 25 Sqn sixty miles east of Great Yarmouth at 0114 hrs, which then crashed at Schiphol on its return. Additionally, eight Ju 88s, four Ju 188s, three Me 410s and a He 177 were destroyed. Hull was the next target on the night of 20 April which saw another four Ju 188s, five Ju 88s, two Do 217 M-1s and a He 177 shot down.

It has been suggested that the reason why *Ogefr.* Hermann Went of 9./KG 2 failed to return from this attack was that his aircraft was shot down between Paris and Charleroi in Belgium by Flt Lt Harry White DFC and Bar and his Nav/Rad Fg Off Mike Allen DFC and Bar of 141 Sqn. It exploded, disintegrated, damaging the Mosquito in the process, and was then seen burning on the ground. The German crew are still recorded as missing. The other loss was attributed to New Zealander Fg Off Bob Walton of 605 Sqn who damaged a Do 217 over Gilze-Rijen at 0122 hrs. Another 9./KG 2 crew reported being attacked by a nightfighter over the airfield and two of the crew bailed out, wounded. The final attacks of the month were against Bristol on the night of 23 April 1944 (a Do 217 M-1 of 8./KG 2 suffered engine failure and the crew bailed out over Caen), followed by a series of attacks against Portsmouth and Plymouth. It was now clear that in addition to London, ports were being targeted in the vain attempt to adversely affect the build-up for the invasion of north-west France. Portsmouth saw four ineffective attacks starting on 25 April which resulted in *Uffz.* Richard Trollhagen of 7./KG 2 being shot down by Flt Lt Vernon Key of 125 Sqn and the loss of two more aircraft whose crew bailed out safely. *Hptm.* Fritz Hauptmann, *Staffelkapitän* of 7./KG 2 of just over two months, then failed to return the following night, with another crew from *Stab.*/KG 2 bailing out safely over France. Then it was Plymouth's turn on the night of 29 April. This was an unusual attack that would involve Do 217 Ks of III./KG 100 attempting an attack on the battleship HMS *King George V* using *Fritz* X glide-bombs. This *Gruppe* had done very little apart from training since moving from Foggia to Toulouse-Blagnac at the start of October 1943. Then, after a few weeks of continued inactivity, the *Gruppe* moved to Eggebek in northern Germany for further training and 8. and 9./KG 100 then returned to Toulouse-Francazal in mid-February 1944 to carry out yet more training; the attack on Plymouth was their first operational mission for nearly seven months.

The target for III./KG 100 on the night of 29 April 1944 – HMS King George V.



In darkness on the morning of 29 April 1944, 15 crews of III./KG 100, each of their aircraft carrying a single *Fritz* X, took off from Toulouse-Francazal for Orleans where they met with their *Kommandeur*, *Hptm.* Herbert Pfeffer, who had been visiting Garz in Germany following a meeting in Berlin. Garz was the base for *Erprobungskommando* 36, the unit responsible for developing the Hs 293 and *Fritz* X. It appears that Pfeffer, aged 33, had little combat experience, at least since February 1943, and had taken over III./KG 100 from *Hptm.* Gerhard Döhler in December of that year. That afternoon, the crews were briefed as to their target and tactics but the issue was that they were not used to dropping *Fritz* X at night, let alone on a combat mission. For many crews, including *Hptm.* Pfeffer, this would be their first operational mission with the bomb. Recent reconnaissance photographs had shown a *King George V* class battleship lying north to south in a basin to the east side of the Hamoaze, the estuary that flows past Devonport Naval Dockyard in Plymouth, as well as another battleship and a cruiser nearby.

No more than 12 aircraft then took off from Orleans that night and headed to Morlaix in Brittany where they would pick up the *Knickebein* blind-bombing beam and head for Plymouth. They would then use the same beam to head back for Toulouse after the attack. The target was meant to be illuminated by I./KG 66 but it would appear that they were late or the Do 217s were early, as when the first aircraft arrived over Plymouth at 0330 hrs, no flares were seen. Furthermore, a mist and a smokescreen further obscured the city. What happened afterwards is that minimal damage was inflicted on Plymouth, let alone the warships, and two Ju 88s from 5./KG 6 and 9./KG 54 and two Fw 190s from 3./SKG 10 were lost. In addition, two Do 217s were also lost. The Do 217 K-3 flown by *Lt.* Herbert Palme of 9./KG 100 was the fourth aircraft to take off from Orleans but as he approached Plymouth, his ailerons apparently jammed. He then made a guess at where his target was and the bomb was dropped but, shortly after, his aircraft was illuminated by searchlights and, blinded, Palme lost control and the Dornier went into a spin and crashed near Totnes in Devon. The second was a Do 217 K-2 which was flown by the *Kommandeur*. On reaching the target area, its crew could see nothing so they orbited four times, during which the bomber was illuminated by searchlights, the pilot blinded and the starboard engine set on fire. The bomb was jettisoned and the crew attempted to bail out, but Pfeffer and his observer were killed when the bomber crashed south of Plymouth; two of the crew survived, one being captured by American soldiers south of St Germans, the other being rescued from the sea at 0645 hrs at Portwrinkle. Although the German survivors thought they had been shot down by Flak or lost control, Sqn Ldr David Williams of 406 Sqn was credited with two Do 217s and reported the following:

Sqn Ldr David Williams of 406 Sqn who accounted for two Do 217 Ks on the night of 29 April 1944.

> 'A free chase to a well-illuminated target due south was then made and AI contact was obtained at five mile range on a violently jinking target which was identified as a Do 217 and attack was made at minimum range while the enemy aircraft was still illuminated. Hits were seen on the starboard engine causing immediate flames to spread and pieces were seen to fall off the wing. The aircraft then spun straight in landing on ground and control reported a body found.
>
> 'A second contact had been held at two miles range to starboard which was then followed out to sea, jinking violently. This was also identified as a Do 217 and attack was made at 100 yds with a short burst on the starboard side; the enemy bursting into flames, turning on its back and crashing into the sea.'

David Williams was destined to meet up with III./KG 100 again, this time in daylight, in just under three months' time.

The Luftwaffe had boasted that 400 aircraft took part in this attack but in reality it was more like 30-35 aircraft according to the British. The alert had sounded at 0315 hrs and lasted 70 minutes and part of the post-raid report read as follows:

> 'The main weight of the attack was concentrated on the waterfront with the heaviest incident in the vicinity of Oreston. It was at this village that the civilian population was tragically hit with a death toll of 18 – four men, 11 women and three girls – and seven injured seriously. The heaviest toll of life was taken when an Anderson shelter received a direct hit and six people were killed, while in a public shelter – which was also hit – nine people were killed. Among the victims were the wife and daughter of a merchant sailor serving at Alexandria and her two daughters aged 12 and four [Gwendoline Carder and her daughters June and Maureen]. In Plymouth itself there was a death toll of nine, including three fire watchers at the Western National Omnibus Company's bus depot, and 16 people were seriously injured. The bus depot received a direct hit and a few of the buses were destroyed by fire. The second most serious incident within the city was in the Milehouse region where bombs fell in Browning Road, Fisher Road and Beaumont Street, claiming victims and causing widespread havoc among residential property.'

No ships were sunk but it appears that one *Fritz* X '...fell right in the centre of the Gas Company's recreation ground; it simply left a huge crater without causing any damage to the tremendous collection of vehicles and other war materials assembled around the fringe of the ground.'

Back in the Mediterranean, the first Hs 293 attack in April 1944 came on the first day of the month against convoy 'Tennant'. No Hs 293 hits were scored, but two aircraft of 6./KG 100 were lost. One flown by *Lt.* Hans Kieffer suffered technical problems and turned back, only to then suffer an engine failure. Kieffer ordered the crew to bail out and the Do 217 E-5 crashed five kilometres south of the Punta Enciola lighthouse on the island of Cabrera, south of Mallorca. The body of *Ogefr.* Peter Brühl (gunner) was washed ashore on Mallorca eleven days later while the body of *Uffz.* Johannes Böckler (radio operator) was recovered by the same fishing boat that rescued Hans Kieffer from his dinghy eleven hours after the crash. Just the parachute of *Uffz.* Richard Weise (observer) was recovered from the sea. The second aircraft flown by *Uffz.* Albert Eversberg crashed at Lloret del Mar in Spain. Those killed in these two crashes now lie in the German cemetery at Cuacos de Yuste in Spain.

The next attack was against convoy UGS-37 on 12 April 1944 which again saw no ships hit and the loss of the Do 217 E-5 of 5./KG 100 flown by *Lt.* Horst Hennig. This would culminate in attacks on the convoys UGS-38 'Whoopee' and 'Donaghue' on 20 April 1944 although five ships were claimed sunk and two damaged by III./KG 26, I. and III./KG 77 and II./KG 100. This included the destroyer USS *Lansdale*, which was being used for jamming Hs 293 signals; ironically it was a torpedo, not an Hs 293, that sunk her. Other losses included the Liberty ship *Paul*

Hamilton, another torpedo victim, which exploded – thanks to its cargo of high explosives – killing all 580 on board including 154 officers and men of the B-24 Liberator-equipped 831st Bombardment Sqn and 317 officers and men of the F-5 Lightning-equipped 32nd Photo Reconnaissance Squadron. The explosion was witnessed in horror by three Beaufighter crews of 153 Sqn flying above the convoy and just one body was recovered from the sea. Also sunk was the 7,900 GRT *Royal Star* (carrying refrigerated and dehydrated meat) with one crew-member killed. Two more Liberty ships, *Stephen S Austin* and *Samite,* were damaged, the former being abandoned but later saved.

It cannot be said with any high degree of certainty whether any of these ships were hit or sunk by II./KG 100. However, German losses were four Ju 88s from KG 77, one Ju 88 from III./KG 26, four Ju 88 C-6/R-2 fighter escorts from I. and III./ZG 1 and two Do 217 E-5s from 6./KG 100. One, flown by *Ofw.* Heinz Kostropetsch, crashed at Istres with all four crew wounded after having been damaged by a fighter, while the aircraft commanded by *Staffelkapitän Hptm.* Willi Scholl failed to return. The only claims for Do 217s were filed by Beaufighters of 153 Sqn which claimed one destroyed and one damaged. The crew probably responsible for shooting down Willi Scholl were Flt Lt John King and Fg Off Bill Allison, who recorded the following:

> 'Patrol over Whoopee. Several vectors and a contact obtained on a Do 217. E/a opened fire without damaging Beaufighter. Beaufighter turned gently to port and dived on hostile opening fire at 200 yds range. Strikes all along starboard wing up to fuselage seen and e/a did a violent turn to starboard. Flames broke out and pieces of aircraft flew off starboard engine and wing. Beaufighter fired again but no strikes observed. More return fire experienced without result. Soon after e/a climbed slightly then fell away into the sea.'

The crew that probably damaged *Ofw.* Heinz Kostropetsch's aircraft were Plt Off John Horlock and Sgt Frank Rapley who wrote:

> 'Visual obtained on two Do 217s flying in a northerly direction. Closed to 500 yds and attacked with three bursts of MG and cannon fire. Bright flash seen on port engine of enemy aircraft which went down in a shallow dive. Second attack made from 500 ft above. No strikes noticed on this occasion. E/a when last seen was still right on the deck turning slightly to starboard. Contact then obtained on a second Do 217 but hit his slipstream and had difficulty in preventing own aircraft ditching.'

153 Sqn did not get off without loss – Flt Sgt Frank Quinn was shot down by return fire having claimed to have shot down a He 177; he was reported missing but his Nav/Rad WO Stanley Sim was rescued.

The 5. and 6./KG 100 would no longer play any active role in operations over the Mediterranean. The 6./KG 100, now commanded by *Oblt.* Siegfried Koezle, would remain at Toulouse-Blagnac while the remainder of the *Gruppe* started converting to the He 177. The 6.*Staffel* would then exchange places with *Hptm.* Rudolf Noderer's 8./KG 100, the new 6.*Staffel* then starting to convert to the He 177. By the time of the Normandy invasion on 6 June 1944, the only KG 100 Do 217-equipped *Gruppe* would be III./KG 100 which would be active in small numbers over Normandy and off the French Atlantic coast, but its time on operations would then last just over two months.

May 1944 was a quiet month for the Do 217 and, with the Allied invasion of Normandy just a month away, the Luftwaffe was unable to make any impression on the massing Allied forces. Losses both on the Eastern Front, from nightfighters and over England were unusually light. On 30 April 1944, KG 2 had returned en masse to Germany for a break in operations and did not return to France until 13 May 1944 and the only remaining Do 217 *Staffel*, *Oblt.* Peter Müller's 7./KG 2, moved to Lorient in western France together with the *Kommandeur, Maj.* Albert Schreiweis. The 8. and 9./KG 2 were apparently converting to the Ju 188 at Hesepe but this would be curtailed following the invasion.

The following night Bristol was the target for 91 aircraft and, as usual, bombs were scattered over various points in south-west England with just 3 of the 83 tons dropped that night landing on Bristol. The defences exacted a heavy toll on the attackers with three Ju 88s from KG 30 and KG 54, six Ju 188s from KG 2 and KG 6 and four Do 217s from 7./KG 2 failing to return. Claims for Do 217s were made by Sqn Ldr Miroslav Mansfeld of 68 Sqn (two Do 217s destroyed over the Channel) and Flt Lt John Surman of 604 Sqn (20 miles south of the Needles), which matches with aircraft flown by *Uffz.* Günter Zimmerman, *Uffz.* Helmut Dahm and a third aircraft which came down in the Channel with the gunner wounded. One aircraft came down on land at West Camel near Yeovilton in Somerset. *Ofhr.* Hans Domschke and his crew were on their first operational flight but were intercepted by Fg Off Ray Jeffs of 488 Sqn who, after claiming the destruction of a Ju 88 (probably a Ju 188 of 2./KG 6 flown by *Lt.* Gerhard Wentz which crashed at Henstridge in Somerset), recorded the following combat:

> 'I observed another illuminated a/c at about 2-3,000 ft above me. I was at 13,000 ft. I closed target, being helped by my navigator, as searchlight several times momentarily lost target. Finally I closed to 900 ft and identified the target as a Do 217. The target throughout this chase was taking violent evasive action. From this range I gave a three-second burst from dead astern observing strikes on port engine and wing. The Do 217 then did a violent starboard turn and I got in a short deflection burst observing a few strikes on the starboard wing. The e/a then turned straight onto his port wingtip and was last seen going down vertically with smoke pouring from his port engine.'

The Do 217 crew stated afterwards that they had been attacked by a nightfighter which they evaded, only to lose control in a diving turn following being picked up by a searchlight. Three of the crew bailed out but the pilot was killed in the crash. Meanwhile, Flt Sgt James Concannon, a Nav/Rad on 488 Sqn, had just landed at Zeals and at 0148 hrs saw an aircraft with its port engine streaming smoke and, held by a searchlight, hit the ground between west and south-west of Zeals – precisely the time that Ray Jeffs last saw his victim and, as a result, his claim for 'probably destroyed' was upgraded to 'destroyed'.

There would be another fruitless attack on Portsmouth the following night which resulted in the loss of *Ofhr.* Siegfried Radler and his crew from 7./KG 2 as well as a Ju 188 from 2./KG 2 and Ju 88s from 7. and 8./KG 54. No Do 217s were claimed by RAF fighters that night. For the last two weeks of May 1944 and the first week of June

1944, attacks were infrequent but still costly – a mining/bombing sortie to Portsmouth on the night of 23 May 1944 resulted in the loss of one Ju 188, flown by the *Geschwaderkommodore* of KG 2, *Oberst* Wilhelm Rath, seven Ju 88s and a single Fw 190. The only Do 217-equipped unit, 7./KG 2, lost over half of its original number of 10 in the two attacks in May. Thirteen aircrew had been killed and three captured in these two attacks – aircrew which would be needed from 6 June onwards.

The beginning of the end for the Do 217 as a conventional bomber began on 6 June 1944 with the Allied invasion of Normandy. By now and due to Allied air superiority, KG 2 had, since January 1944, been operating from airfields well inside Germany and so to reach Normandy, crews had to either use forward bases in those French or Dutch bases safe enough from Allied aircraft, or face longer trips from Germany and the risk of meeting Allied intruders. Bombing and mining missions began on the evening of 6 June with usually two waves being flown over a number of nights. By the start of June it was just III./KG 2 that was flying the Do 217 and attacks were rarely made by more than nine aircraft. Losses suffered by III./KG 2 were, due to the lack of numbers, light with six occurring due to weather or technical problems between 6 and 22 June 1944. Then on 22 June 1944, III./KG 2 began handing its aircraft to I./KG 2 and it moved to Friedrichshafen where it was hoped pilots would convert to the Do 335 fighter, something that never happened. As a result crews did go to form V./NJG 2, to fly the Ju 88 but still commanded by *Maj.* Albert Schreiweis. However, again, the *Gruppe* only became operational when it was too late.

From now on I./KG 2, operating with no more than 16 aircraft, was the only *Gruppe* from the *Geschwader* still flying operationally. Combat losses due to the reduced numbers were still light; June 1944 saw just 11 Do 217s lost in combat and accidents with another 11 in July 1944. However, many crews managed to bail out over German lines so their names were not listed in German records if they were unwounded. Claims by Allied nightfighters were rare and the first so recorded was not made until 0525 hrs on 30 July 1944 when Flt Lt George 'Jamie' Jameson of 488 Sqn claimed to have shot down a Do 217 just south of Lisieux, having claimed three Ju 88s before that. This was believed to be a Do 217 M-1 of 3./KG 2 flown by *Lt.* Roderich von Parpart who, with his *Beobachter*, bailed out, both wounded, over German lines when shot down by a nightfighter, being one of 11 Do 217s attacking troops at St Lô between 0515 and 0520 hrs that morning. The remaining two crew were killed, one of their deaths being recorded as being at St Putanjes. Jameson's combat report relates what happened in what was his fourth successful combat that night:

> 'I once again saw AA fire ahead above cloud and I headed towards it and at 0522 hrs contact was obtained on two aircraft and much Window (a) at a range of four miles 10 o'clock (b) 2 miles 10 o'clock. I decided to intercept the nearer of the two and obtained a visual dead astern at a range of 4,000 on a Do 217. The e/a must have seen me for almost immediately it dived into cloud and took very intensive evasive action and threw out large quantities of Window for several minutes in cloud. I followed through cloud using AI and the e/a eventually straightened out at cloud base. Visual was regained at a range of 2000 ft dead astern and below. I closed to 300 yds and fired a short burst. Strikes were seen on the fuselage which began to burn furiously. The e/a turned gently to starboard, pulled his nose up and the dorsal gunner opened fire a wild burst which headed in the wrong direction. The e/a dived into the ground in flames and exploded.'

August 1944 would be the final month of operations for I./KG 2 with at least 12 aircraft lost in action or accidents and with more being lost in bombing or strafing attacks on home airfields. Although some Do 217s were claimed by nightfighters, the first I./KG 2 Do 217 to be lost that can be matched to a claim was when *Uffz.* Karl Schneider of 3./KG 2 failed to return from an attack on Falaise on the night of 18 August 1944. His aged Do 217 E-4 was one of 19 that took off from Schiphol between 2326 and 2327 hrs. Fg Off Ray Jeffs of 488 Sqn claimed a Do 217 south of Rouen at 2343 hrs which, if it was Schneider's, would indicate the Do 217 was on its way home; but it is also possible that he was shot down by a P-61 Black Widow of the 422nd Nightfighter Sqn crewed by 1/Lt Leonard Koehler and 2/Lt Louis Bost who claimed a Do 217 off Bayeux between 0155 and 0208.

The following night the target was again Falaise for 23 Do 217s which were operational just after midnight. *Oblt.* Wolfgang Dädelow of 1./KG 2 was shot down by a nightfighter, the crew bailing out 30 km east-north-east of Rouen, all but one of them unwounded and all landing behind German lines. A second aircraft was apparently lost with no crew casualties, while *Fw.* Karl Küster of 3./KG 2 crashed at Londerzeel north of Brussels on the way back, killing all of the crew. The only claim that night was by Sqn Ldr Dick Hatton and Flt Lt Russ Rivers of 409 Sqn who claimed a Do 217 at 0025 hrs near Neufchatel, north-east of Rouen, witnessing at least three of the crew bailing out.

An unexplained loss occurred at 0020 hrs on 23 August 1944 when a Do 217 M-1 of 3./KG 2 was plotted flying towards the English coast, then heading east, then crossing the coast at Dungeness and then heading towards Dover, where it was shot down by Flak and crashed at Elham in Kent, killing *Fw.* Lukas Jooss and his crew. What the aircraft was doing and why it appeared not to be carrying bombs has not been explained but it was the last Do 217 to crash on British soil during the war.

The beginning of the end for the Do 217 of I./KG 2 came on 3 September 1944 when at least six Do 217s were destroyed on the ground at Gilze-Rijen and Soesterberg when both airfields were bombed by 108 Lancasters and 105 Halifaxes and nine Lancasters respectively. Gilze-Rijen was then attacked by 12 Spitfire fighter-bombers from 350 Sqn and another 12 from 402 Sqn, the attack being led by Wg Cdr Edward 'Hawkeye' Wells, while 310 and 312 Sqn led by Wg Cdr Tomas Vybiral did the same at Soesterberg; both Wing Leaders were former Battle of Britain pilots. The following day another two Do 217s ended the same way with another flown by *Oblt.* Manfred Michler crashing on take-off. It would appear that the last Do 217s of KG 2 to be shot down in combat occurred on 5 September 1944 when three Do 217s, one of them flown by *Oblt.* Ulrich Frenzel of *Stab./*KG 2, were reported shot down by enemy fighters. Capt Gordon Burlingame of 352nd FS claimed shooting one of these down near Apeldoorn at 1130 hrs. He reported the following:

> 'We had pranged some trains and trucks and were cruising south at 1,800 ft looking for more targets. I sighted a large aircraft travelling fast on the deck and headed south-east. I put everything to the wall and closed to identify it as a

Do 217. I took a short burst and saw no strikes. E/a started taking evasive action and I fired a burst and saw a few hits around the left engine and then more hits and pieces flew off the aircraft. I continued closing and saw strikes over across the wing to the right wingtip. I then found myself closing extremely fast and had to break off. Immediately my Numbers 3 and 4 moved in and fired and broke off. I then came in on a second pass and saw strikes near the cockpit and a split second later the aircraft touched the ground bellying in. The left wing dropped at the same time and I continued firing as the tail swung in a 270 degree arc. I stopped firing as it slid to a halt as dust obscured the wreck. It was then strafed by Lt William McGarry and as we left it the e/a was a crumpled mass of wreckage on fire.'

It appears that these aircraft were returning to Germany as the only casualty from the three was a ground crew-member and what was left of the Do 217s of KG 2 now returned to Neu-Hardenberg in Germany; on 3 October 1944, the *Geschwader* was disbanded. Most pilots went to single-seat fighter units and the remaining aircrew dispersed throughout the Luftwaffe, most being used in ground roles. As a result, many inexperienced pilots were killed in air combat and many others were killed or captured in bitter ground battles in the remaining seven months of the war.

One Do 217 unit still struggled to continue the fight over Normandy and also tried to use a new version of the Do 217. The M-11 was powered by DB 603 A-2 engines, was fitted with four-bladed propellers and the bomb bay was redesigned to accommodate the tail unit of the *Fritz* X. Its defensive armament consisted of three MG 131s and two MG 81s and the tail was modified with the *Rüstsatz* 23 (R23) *Giesskanne* (watering can) modification of two rear-firing MG 81Zs. A single *Fritz* X was carried underneath a modified fuselage just behind the *Bola*. At the same time, 6./KG 100 was equipped with the new type and exchanged places with 8./KG 100.

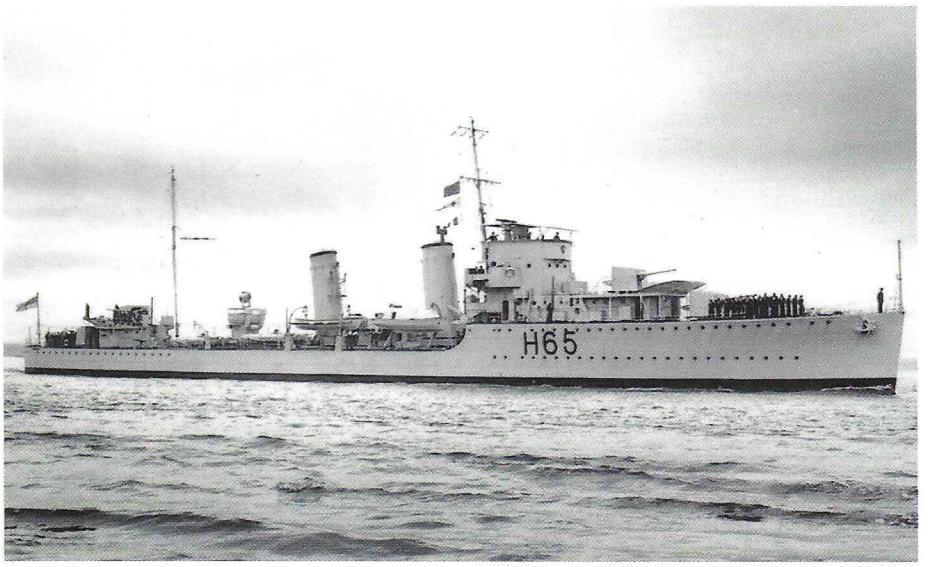
Following the Normandy invasion, III./KG 100 was soon in action over the beaches against shipping, flying its first Hs 293 mission on the night of 7-8 June 1944 and, together with the He 177s of II./KG 40, they were credited with damaging the Landing Ship HQ HMS *Buolo* and sinking the destroyer HMS *Lawford*, 37 crew being killed on the latter. However, it came at a cost, with *Stab* III./KG 100 losing a Do 217 K-3 and 6./KG 100, now flying with III. *Gruppe*, losing a Do 217 E-5. Both were shot down by Flak into the Seine Bay with no survivors from *Oblt.* Oskar Schmidtke and *Ofw.* Bruno Obst's crews.

Two nights later 6./KG 100 lost its first two Do 217 M-11s flown by *Oblt.* Heinrich Kirchoff and *Fhj-Fw.* Gerhard Klemp whilst attacking shipping off Barfleur, while 9./KG 100 also lost a Do 217 K-3-flown by *Lt.* Heinz Schulz. Kirchoff was shot down on the return flight to Toulouse by German Flak, crashing near Marmande where he and two of his crew were captured and later executed by the *Maquis*. Klemp crashed at Le Lourouz-Béconnais, 25 km north-west of Angers in western France, probably as a result of Flak, which resulted in the deaths of all of his crew. Schulz's Do 217 was thought to have come down in the Seine Bay; again there were no survivors. However, it is possible that this 9./KG 100 aircraft was shot down by Flt Lt Bill Cowper and Fg Off Bill Watson of 456 Sqn who, after shooting down a He 177 A of 6./KG 100 flown by *Oblt.* Adolf Busch – which crashed on land at Tocqueville west of Barfleur at 0400 hrs – five minutes later claimed a Do 217 which crashed at Beaumont-Hague. They recorded what happened:

'Pilot made a climbing turn to starboard and another contact was immediately obtained at approximately 0405 hrs head on slightly to starboard at 4,000 ft and five miles range. This aircraft was also dropping Window. We continued to climb and turning to port came in behind and about 10° below and obtained a visual on a Do 217 at 2,000 ft. E/a was recognised by square outlines of the twin tail unit, bulbous nose and broad rounded wings. He was carrying one glide-bomb outboard of port nacelle but there was nothing visible under the starboard wing. No exhaust glow was visible and e/a took no evasive action although continuing to drop Window. His speed was estimated at 240. One short burst was fired from 450 ft which set the port engine and inboard mainplane ablaze. We took up position above and to port and watched the fire develop. E/a went into a steep diving turn to port, pieces falling off meanwhile eventually it hit the beach, a ball of fire and a brief interval later exploded lighting up the whole area.'

It was normal for the Hs 293 to be carried under the starboard wing with a fuel tank under the port wing for the transit from Toulouse to Normandy and back, suggesting that the Do 217 had already launched its missile. Furthermore, Beaumont-Hague is to the west of Barfleur and Seine Bay.

The 13 June 1944 would see the sinking of HMS *Boadicea* 16 miles south-west of Portland with only 12 of the crew of 182 surviving. It has been suggested that her loss was as a result of an Hs 293 launched by III./KG 100 but it is now believed that it was a torpedo dropped by a Ju 88 from KG 77 that was responsible. Then, on the night of 14 June 1944, two aircraft from 9./KG 100 (a K-2 and a K-3), flown by *Ofw.* Kurt Faust and *Fw.* Rudolf Soll respectively, while returning from attacking shipping off Cherbourg, flew into the ground in the Sacon Valley near St Laurent de Neste, 53 km east of Tarbes in southern France, killing both crews. Again there were no survivors. A third aircraft, a Do 217 K-3 of 7./KG 100 flown by *Lt.* Dietrich Leydhecker, was believed to have been shot down by Flak off Cherbourg with the pilot and one crew-member returning, but two crew were killed. However, at 2250 hrs while escorting Lancasters, Spitfires of 144 Wing and in particular 443 Sqn, reported encountering Do 217s



HMS Boadicea's *sinking on 13 June 1944 was thought to be due to an Hs 293. It is now suggested that it was sunk by an air-launched torpedo from a Ju 88.*

10 miles north-north-east of Le Havre. Plt Off Rooney Hodgins of 443 Sqn describes what happened:

> 'We were at 23,000 ft and heading north away from us at roughly the same height were aircraft in pairs which were later distinguished as Do 217s. I was not certain of the aircraft due to the darkness so gave chase, my No 1 taking a pair and likewise. These two aircraft were escorted by a single fighter which I believe to be a Fw 190. As I drew close to them a Lancaster passed overhead and the Dornier upper gunner squirted him with tracer. I waited no longer but did my attack opening fire at 500 yds at five degrees and closed to line astern into roughly 100 yds squirting him continually. The other Dornier to his left opened fire on me and when he did the fighter pulled up and my quarry squirted me also. This drew my attention to the other Do 217 so I saw few strikes on the e/a. I broke underneath and as I pulled up to reposition myself, the e/a's starboard motor was seen to burst into flame. He turned starboard in more or less of a flick into his damaged engine, went into a flat spin burning as he went. I watched him fall at least 5,000 ft out of control.'

The Canadian pilot noted that each of the Do 217s was carrying what appeared to be a 1,000-lb bomb externally between the starboard engine and fuselage. Although four Do 217s from III./KG 2 were operating that night, they were attacking much later and were carrying SC 50 bombs internally, not SC 500 bombs externally. Sqn Ldr Wally McLeod of 443 Sqn also spotted three Do 217s flying north-north-west, crossing the coast at Trouville and shot one of them down into the sea south-west of Le Havre. Apart from Leydhecker's aircraft, no other Do 217s were lost that night.

No reported attacks on shipping by III./KG 100 have emerged for the remainder of June 1944, but just one more aircraft was lost that month when a Do 217 K-3 of 7./KG 100, flown by *Lt.* Roland Faude, is thought to have crashed between Moulines and Thury Harcourt south of Caen on 25 June 1944 with the deaths of all of the crew. This location was given for the death place of the pilot, but another crew-member was reported killed at Acqueville further west. The cause cannot be said for certain, although Flt Lt Don Steele of 409 Sqn claimed to have damaged a Do 217 20 miles south-east of Le Havre at 0045 hrs, nowhere near these locations. It was reported that seven Do 217s of III./KG 2 were mining between 0058 and 0105 hrs, but they reported no losses or combats.

The next major attack by all available aircraft from III./KG 100 and He 177s of I./KG 40 came on the night of 4 July 1944 against shipping in the Orne Estuary. RAF nightfighters wreaked havoc amongst the attacking aircraft, the attack not surprisingly failing in its objective. 456 Sqn claimed three He 177s – four failed to return and, to make matters worse, P-47s of the 20th FG claimed another He 177 from 6./KG 40 near Cognac. This effectively spelt the end of He 177 Hs 293 operations over Normandy. Of the twelve Do 217s attacking that night with an equal mix of Hs 293s and *Fritz* X missiles, *Stab* III./KG 100 lost a Do 217 K-3 flown by *Lt.* Erich Keller; 7./KG 100 lost a K-3 and two M-11s, the latter two being flown by *Fw.* Simon Obermeier and *Fw.* Karl Hipp; and 8. and 9./KG 100 a K-3 each flown by *Lt.* Siegfried Kynast and *Lt.* Ludwig Schäfer respectively.

Nightfighters claimed to have destroyed two Do 217s, the victors being Sqn Ldr Bill Gill of 125 Sqn (20 miles south-west of Le Havre at 0010 hrs) and Plt Off Stan Williams of 456 Sqn (70 miles south of Newhaven at 0011 hrs). Both pilots reported that the Do 217s they shot down had bombs outboard of the engines. Spitfires of 411 Sqn flown by Sqn Ldr Graham Robertson and Flt Lt Hugh Trainor also reported shooting down a Do 217 two miles off Cabourg at 2238 hrs, the bomber appearing to drop its Hs 293. Flight Officer Richard Seage, an American flying Mosquitos with 21 Sqn, also claimed to have damaged another Do 217 in the Loire area at 0130 hrs; it is possible that this claim was for the 9./KG 100 aircraft of Ludwig Schäfer which was reported lost over the Gironde Estuary. Of the 22 crew lost, just *Lt.* Erich Keller, *Gruppe* Technical Officer, *Ogefr.* Hans Menne of 7./KG 100 and *Lt.* Siegfried Kynast of 8./KG 100 were reported as captured. It would appear that Erich Keller was shot down by 411 Sqn as his bomber crashed in the sea off the Orne Estuary at 2238 hrs. The Do 217 of Hans Menne, who was the *Bordmechaniker* to *Fw.* Obermeier, came down at Isigny-sur-Mer at 0020 hrs, while Siegfried Kynast came down in the sea off Le Havre.

Yet another loss of a crew from a Dornier Do 217 M-11 of III./KG 100, seen burning in the sea off Gironde Estuary after being shot down by Mosquitos of 235 Sqn, one of which is circling above. (via Bird)

Further missions continued throughout July 1944 with a possible success claimed on the night of 6 July 1944 (no ships were reported as being hit that night). Losses were recorded on 17 July 1944 for a Do 217 K-2 of 9./KG 100 flown by *Uffz.* Alfred Borowitzki (all four crew killed) and on 20 July 1944 for a Do 217 K-3 of 9./KG 100 flown by *Ofw.* Wilhelm Schneckner which crashed at Cornebarrieu near Toulouse at 2230 hrs while returning from operations, killing him and two crew, but with the *Bordfunker* surviving injured. It was stated that by now III./KG 100's targets were shipping blockading the port of Brest but then, between 2155 and 2242 hrs on 17 July 1944, Spitfires of 401 Sqn intercepted Do 217s in the Caen/Cabourg/west of Le Havre general area, with Flt Lt Bill Klersey shooting down one and Fg Off 'Tex' Davenport another. I./KG 2 was operating seven Do 217s that night at targets west-south-west of Caen but reported no losses. Three nights later III./KG 100 was operating off Brest as, on 20 July 1944, three Do 217s, each with two Hs 293s, were recorded as attacking the Canadian frigates HMCS *Matane, Meon, Stormont* and *Swansea* which were looking for U-boats off Brest. An Hs 293 just missed HMCS *Meon* and then a Do 217 appeared off the starboard quarter of HMCS *Matane* and released its missile, which penetrated the vessel's light upper structure aft and passed through the ship, just missing the aft magazine ammunition elevator. It finally exploded in the water alongside, flooding the engine room and disabling the port engine. There was no fire, and flooding was contained to one compartment. At least three crew were killed and a number of others wounded.

It would be different the following day when an attack planned for 21 July 1944 was again thwarted by defending aircraft. That morning, a cruiser and at least two destroyers of the 14th Destroyer Escort Group were sighted off Brest and six aircraft, each loaded with Hs 293s, took off from Toulouse-Blagnac at 1045 hrs. They flew to the Bay of Biscay and then headed north, following the coast flying in pairs. At 1320 hrs when south-west of Ushant, they spotted not only their targets but two Mosquitos of 406 Sqn led by Sqn Ldr David Williams, two Mosquitos of 235 led by Wg Cdr John Yonge and two Mosquitos of 248 Sqn led by Flt Lt Fred Passey. The result was inevitable, as David Williams remembers:

> 'The weather in England was solid fog and Group asked for volunteers to defend a group of Navy destroyers. We took off following the runway lights and proceeded to the rendezvous. On approaching the ships, I spotted two Do 217s making a run from south-west. I closed on the nearest one and opened fire. I observed hits and the aircraft either ditched or crashed into the sea. I had been caught in a crossfire and my starboard engine was shot out. I feathered it and started to attack the remaining Dornier. In spite of two cannons jammed I opened fire and observed hits. Before I could finish the kill the crew-members started bailing out. As the aircraft was not heading in the direction of the destroyers I pulled back and informed the Navy there were aircrew in the ocean. Before I could close to finish the kill, a Coastal Command Mosquito closed in and shot it down. I believe they credited me with a shared kill.'

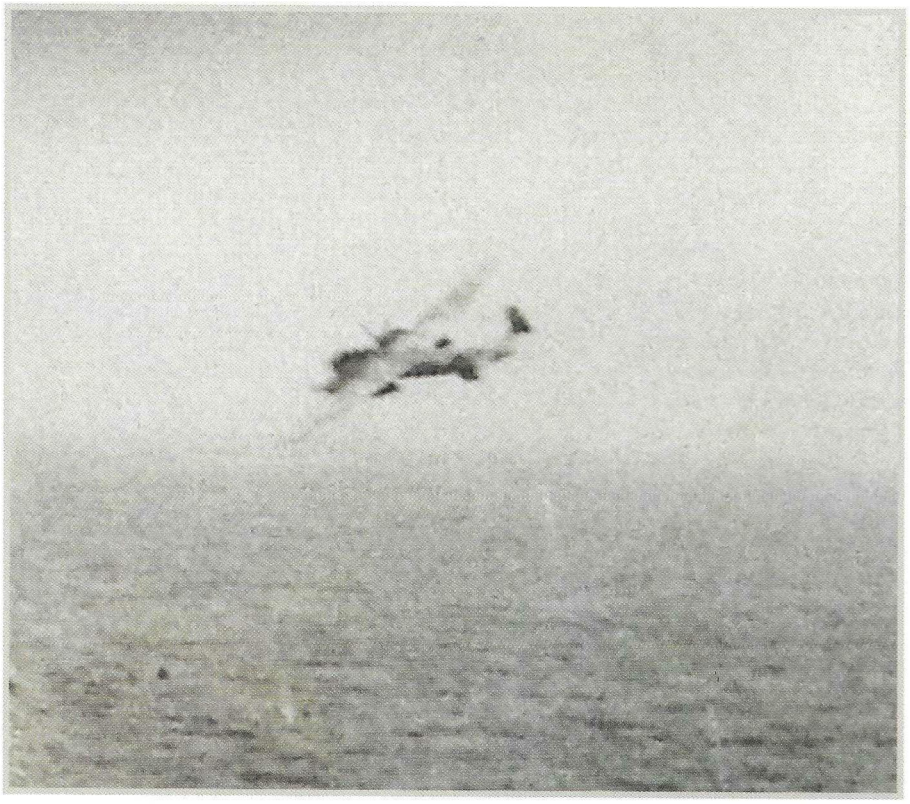
Wg Cdr John Yonge reported that, at 1320 hrs, they spotted two Do 217s in echelon to port which they immediately attacked, one exploding in the air, one crashing into the sea. Fred Passey then recorded the following:

> 'Sighted unidentified aircraft crash in the sea and explode and the survivors picked up by a surface vessel. At 1337 hrs, a Do 217 was sighted and both aircraft attacked and claim to have destroyed the enemy aircraft. At 1348 hrs a second Do 217 was sighted and engaged, scoring numerous strikes. The enemy aircraft dived into cloud and is probably destroyed.'

The first two aircraft lost, both Do 217 M-11s, were led by *Oblt.* Karl Lamp, the *Staffelführer* of 9./KG 100 – who was leading the *Staffel*, while *Oblt.* Helmut Dietrich was recovering from wounds received in an air attack on 23 June 1944 – while the second aircraft was made up from a scratch crew from 7., 8. and 9./KG 100 and flown by *Uffz.* Gustav Schmidt. Only one crewman was killed from Lamp's crew and all from Schmidt's crew were captured. *Uffz.* Georg Dabitz remembers what happened:

> 'After our night mission on 20 July 1944 from Blagnac airfield near Toulouse, *Uffz.* Peters was unable to attend the flight briefing on 21 July at 0800 hrs due to having sinusitis. Despite our protest, *Uffz.* Hopfgartner and I were assigned to *Uffz.* Gustav Schmidt of 7.*Staffel*, who was completely unknown to me, as was the *Beobachter, Uffz.* August Reidenbach, from 8.*Staffel*.
>
> 'Six Do 217s, equipped with Hs 293 guided missiles, were to take off at 1000 hrs. Departure time was delayed by hours because the promised fighter escort from JG 51 in Lyon failed to materialize. There was a nervousness at the air base, a shambles, triggered by the assassination attempt on Hitler on 20 July 1944. Around noon, after a long back and forth, take-off was ordered.
>
> 'We flew next to *Oblt.* Lamp. There was no trace of a fighter escort. To the left of us, approx. 60 km away, were two more aircraft heading north, and also 60 km to the right of us near the coast. I do not know the names of these crews. Suddenly the radio operator, who was sitting behind us in the swivel chair at the machine gun, reported: "Enemy fighters in sight!" and very soon our aircraft was hit. We were lucky that, at this point, we were flying at zero altitude above the water. The emergency ditching took place with the two Hs 293 guided missiles still under the wings. The "colossus" glided on the water for a few seconds. Now everything had to happen quickly to climb out of the sinking coffin. My life was literally hanging by the thread. The emergency exit hatch jammed

Uffz. Herman Peters (pilot), Uffz. Hans Hopfgartner (radio operator), Uffz. Georg Dabitz (flight engineer), Uffz. Paul Schwetzer (observer) of 9./KG 100. On 21 July 1944, Hopfgartner and Dabitz were flying in a mixed crew in an attack on warships off Brest, only to be shot down by Sqn Ldr David Williams of 406 Sqn.



End of a Do 217 M-11 of III./KG 100 over the Bay of Biscay, 21 July 1944 by Mosquitos. Note the feathered starboard propeller and cannon strikes from the Mosquito in the sea, evidenced by vertical plumes of water. (via Thomas).

Flt Lt Johnnie Surman of 604 Sqn who shot down two Bf 110s and a Do 217 on the night of 6 August 1944.

due to the impact. I pulled the hatch lever with desperation. The water was almost up to my neck. Somehow I managed to open the exit. How I was able to free myself from this situation is a mystery to me. I probably owe that to the Kapok life jacket. It gave me buoyancy to get through an opening above my head. So I clambered outside.

'There was not much left to see of the aircraft. Getting away from the sinking Do 217 was a priority, so as not to be pulled down, but a new fight soon began. Somewhere the handle of my backpack parachute got stuck and opened the parachute packaging bag. Catch lines and parachute loosened and wrapped around my body and legs. Now I was fighting the waves and the ballast, which I could not get rid of.

'My comrades were already in their rubber dinghies. They were about 200 metres from me. When they recognized my difficult situation, they came to my aid. Now I was able to inflate my one-man inflatable boat. Thank God – the boat was still intact and I soon sat in it. While the Mosquitos kept flying over us, we bound our boats together and waited for our fate. After two hours we recognized the outline of an English destroyer in the distance. It came closer and soon we were prisoners of war.'

The final aircraft, also a Do 217 M-11, flown by *Lt.* Wolfgang Schirmer of 8./KG 100, was reported missing. In addition to the damage to David Williams' plane, the other 406 Sqn Mosquito flown by Fg Off Bill Meakin was damaged by debris from a stricken Do 217, while Flt Sgt Walter Scott of 248 Sqn failed to return. It is possible that Scott's Mosquito was the B-26 claimed by *Fw.* Steele of 9./KG 100 west of Brest at 1506 hrs.

August 1944 saw fewer attacks against shipping off the Normandy coast but attacks commenced against land targets in an attempt to slow the Allied advance – the first ever such use of stand-off missiles. In particular, the targets were the strategically important Pontaubault and Pontorson bridges at the base of the Cherbourg Peninsula where American troops were pouring through these two bottlenecks. However, the sequence of attacks by III./KG 100 are confusing. American infantry managed to capture the village on Pontaubault on the evening of 30 July 1944 and, between 1 and 4 August 1944, seven divisions of the US Third Army had crossed the bridge headed into Brittany. Some records state that the first attack on the bridges by nine Do 217s of III./KG 100 using *Fritz* X and Hs 293 missiles came on the night of 2 August 1944. However, heavy cloud over the target and heavy Flak meant that the attack was aborted and secondary targets were attacked. Other records state that just three Do 217s carried out an offensive operation that night, flying out over St Malo at 2300 hrs and returning safely. It is possible that a second attack was also carried out with unknown results. Two Do 217s were claimed by Mosquitos that night. The first was by Sqn Ldr Dean Somerville of 410 Sqn who claimed a Do 217 six miles north-west of Pontorson, which crashed vertically into the ground at 2255 hrs. Then at 2305 hrs, Flt Lt Allen Browne of 488 Sqn claimed a Do 217 which crashed four miles east of Avranches at 2305 hrs. The 8./KG 100 recorded losing two Do 217 M-11s flown by *Uffz.* August Stolzenberg and *Deutsches Kreuz in Gold*-winner *Ofw.* Konrad Doser, the latter aircraft crashing north of Vannes. The dates of death of the three crew killed from this aircraft were recorded as being 2, 3 and 4 August 1944!

The next attack was stated as being the following night, during which the bridge was hit and destroyed by an *Ofw.* Kube, a claim which was overly optimistic. Allied radio monitoring claimed that III./KG 100 was now diverted from anti-shipping tasks and that six aircraft attacked the bridges between 2210 and 2230 hrs. Flt Lt Reg Foster DFC of 604 Sqn claimed a Do 217 at 2315 hrs, which crashed within five miles of Granville. His combat report finishes by stating:

> 'Wreckage of a Do 217 which crashed between 2315 and 2330 hrs on 3 August eight miles south of Granville was found by Maj Lewis and Capt Hart 6th Light AA Regt. I claim one Do 217 destroyed.'

7./KG 100 reported the loss of a Do 217 M-11 flown by *Ofw.* Hellmut John on 4 August, which is confused further by an intelligence report dated 11 August 1944 concerning the crash of a Do 217 south of Granville at 2330 hrs on 4 August 1944 based on the interrogation of *Uffz.* Walter Metzger, *Beobachter* in the John crew, who was captured two days after the crash. He told his captors:

> 'About six aircraft from III./KG 100, of which two were from 7.*Staffel*, took off from Toulouse-Blagnac at about 2100 hrs to attack the bridges at Pontaubault. Each aircraft carried one Hs 293. The aircraft flew on a direct course from Toulouse to the target area – there had been some cloud cover on the route, but near Pontaubault the aircraft emerged into clear sky. The crew then found that another aircraft was following them and by the time they had recognised it as an Allied nightfighter, their aircraft was being attacked. The pilot took evasive action but both engines and the fuselage were hit. The Hs 293 was jettisoned and the crew bailed out.'

There is evidence that the bridges were intended to be attacked between 2250 and 2300 hrs on 4 August 1944 and five aircraft were recorded returning to Toulouse-Blagnac between 0120 and 0301 hrs.

The next recorded attack came on the night of 5 August 1944 when up to 10 aircraft took off at around 2300 hrs to again try and attack the bridges. *Stab* III./KG 100 recorded the loss of a Do 217 M-11 flown *by Lt.* Alfred Schlecht – an RAF intelligence report stated that the bomber crashed near St Brieuc at 0100 hrs and that the crew all bailed out. It now seems that the aircraft crashed at St Michel de Prélan, east of St Brieuc, as on 15 August 1944 *Fw.* Günter Eilf (radio operator) was reported as being killed there, his body being found in the wreckage and buried in the village cemetery, while Alfred Schlecht was reported killed at Pledilac, west of St Michel. *Uffz.* Friedrich Höfelmaier (gunner) was captured by French partisans 12 hours after the crash, after which he was held for eight days before being handed over to American troops and it is believed that the remaining crew-member, *Uffz.* Ewald Otto (observer), was also captured. Records show that only one Do 217 was lost that night – Flt Sgt Tom McLean of 488 Sqn reported shooting down a Do 217 10 miles west of Angers at 0217 hrs, but the more likely victor was Flt Lt Peter Hall at 0052 over the Bay of Mont St Michel, who reported:

> 'At 1,500 ft range the target went into a slow turn to port through 360 degrees during which it was identified as a Do 217. In spite of the moon, the lighting conditions were tricky and identification was difficult. The wingspan was very large, probably the Do 217 K-2. During the turn we got a side view of the fins, twin rudders and also saw the black crosses on the wings. I opened fire from 100 yds with a short burst but over deflected and saw no strikes. E/a peeled off to port and I gave it a second short burst from dead astern as it went down, hitting the fuselage and setting the starboard engine on fire. E/a went into a diving turn and just before it hit the ground the fire went out but three seconds later there was an enormous explosion with a great fire and clouds of black smoke.'

The Allies discovered that at least six aircraft were to attack the bridge at Pontorson that night and were recorded returning to Toulouse-Blagnac between 0143 and 0304 hrs.

Another attack against the bridges was launched the following night by ten Do 217s, by which time the Luftwaffe had admitted that in all of the previous attacks, only a few crews had recorded probable hits. Crews had also been told that if they could not guarantee a hit, they were to aim for approach roads and it would appear that this night half the crews went for the bridge and the other half the roads. Flying this night was *Lt.* Hans Kieffer who, on 1 April 1944, had force-landed off Mallorca. Then he was with 6.*Staffel* but with KG 100 hoping to convert to the He 177, he had moved to III.*Gruppe* and was now flying with 7.*Staffel*. He had taken off between 0030 and 0100 hrs and at 0300 hrs was approaching the target area at an altitude of 1200 m, only to find that ground haze up to 500 m had obscured the bridge. It was then that the Do 217 M-11 was attacked by what the crew thought was a Beaufighter but was, in fact, a P-61 Black Widow of the 422nd Nightfighter Sqn, crewed by 2/Lt Eugene Axtell and Flight Officer Joseph Crew. They had got airborne from the advanced airfield A-15 at Maupertus east of Cherbourg at 0130 hrs and reported the following:

> 'The target was taking mild evasive action until the range had been closed to one mile when the e/a began taking violent evasive action at the same time losing altitude from 8,000 ft to 4,500 ft. To further close the range and airspeed in excess of 300 mph was necessary but visual was obtained at 1,500 ft. When the range was approximately 1,000 ft target opened fire obtaining strikes on P-61's starboard propeller and right side of fuselage just aft of pilot with 13 mm machine gun. Range was further closed to 600 ft when the target was identified as a Do 217. Three bursts were fired totalling 120 rounds. Fragments flew off target after which evasive action stopped and he dropped his nose and began to lose altitude in a 30° glide. The pilot states that twin fins seemed to split apart and that he appeared to be flying right through the target which then went into a vertical dive through the cloud layer which was at 3,000 ft.'

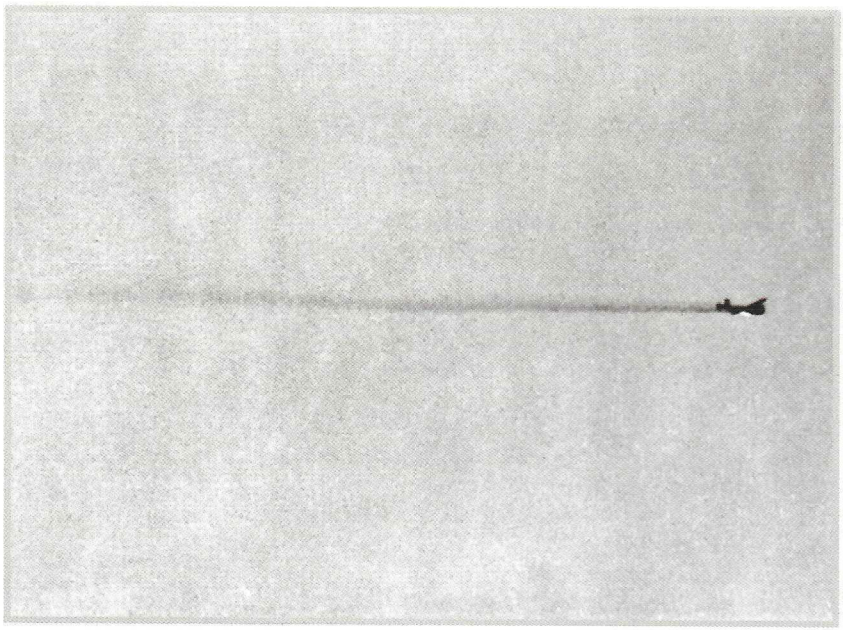
The German crew reported taking violent evasive action and that the third burst of fire from the nightfighter damaged the ailerons and exploded the fuselage tank so the He 293 was jettisoned and the crew bailed out. The combat was reported to have taken place at 0310 hrs over the Bay of Mont St Michel and although the American crew only claimed a probable, the Do 217 crashed five km south of Vire at 0315 hrs. All but the *Bordfunker Uffz.* Max Hochholzer were captured.

A second Do 217 flown by *Lt.* Rudolf Engelmann of 9./KG 100 was lost that night, probably one of the two Do 217s claimed by Flt Lt Johnnie Surman and his Nav/Rad, Fg Off Clarence Weston, of 604 Sqn at 0153 hrs and 0305 hrs; prior to this, near Mortain, he had shot down a Bf 110 G-4 of 8./NJG 4 flown by *Ritterkreuz*-winner *Hptm.* Helmut Bergmann and it is likely that his second victory that night was another Bf 110 G-4 of 8./NJG 1 flown by *Fw.* Günter Zimmermann. The German crew of the Do 217 reported being damaged by Flak and then shot down north of Vire by a Mosquito at around 0330 hrs, Engelmann being killed and the other three captured, one of which was *Bordfunker Fw.* Wilhelm Streb, who had been awarded the *Deutsches Kreuz in Gold* with 5./KG 26 in January 1943.

The night of 7 August would see at least one more attack by eight Do 217 M-11s of III./KG 100 over Normandy but this time against destroyers reported off the Seine Estuary. The attack resulted in *Lt.* Hans-Joachim Schildknecht of 8./KG 100 being shot down by Flak and crashing between Ste Hilaire and Mortain at 0100 hrs; he appears to have been the only survivor. Four minutes later *Lt.* Werner Kirstenpfad of 8./KG 100 claimed to have sunk a 10,000-ton freighter off St Malo. *Oblt.* Roderich Cescotti, flying with *Stab* III./KG 100 in a Do 217 M-11, wrote of the mission that night:

> 'When, on the evening of 7 August 1944, I took off from Toulouse Blagnac on my first 'normal' combat sortie – that is, against regular Allied combatants – for almost a year, the Allies were well-established in northern France, having already taken St. Malo and Brest and encircled the principal U-boat bases of Lorient and St. Nazaire. Our target was the Bay of Avranches, objective of the German counter-thrust across the base of the Cotentin peninsula through which the flow of Allied resources were pouring. We flew north-north-east, across France, through clear night skies. We could see the battle zone from afar, pencil shafts of light probing the sky, searchlights marking out a Flak belt that had been established around the Allied landing zone. At an altitude of 4,000 m we had no difficulty picking out the bay of Avranches, literally teeming with shipping of all types. There was no way that

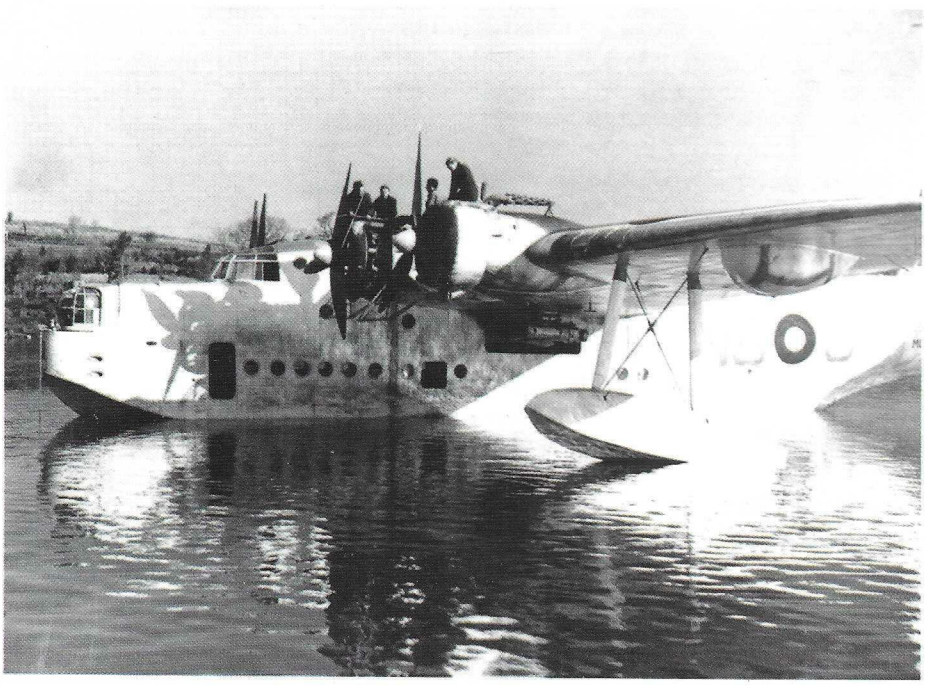
Oblt. Roderich Cescotti, Stab III./KG 100.



End of another Do 217 M-11 of III./KG 100, 9 August 1944. (via Thomas).

we would be hauling the Hs 293 back to Toulouse. I started to let down through the Flak belt so that we could get a clearer picture of what was going on. There, directly ahead of us, a huge silhouette – but I had to break off before my *Beobachter* could get a clear fix on his screen. We came around for a second try. Now everything was set. The dark silhouette was some two or three kilometres ahead of us. We sped directly towards it, holding the aircraft on course, as straight as a die, to make my *Beobachter's* task of guiding the missile onto the target as easy as possible. Then, a barely perceptible hissing, a diffuse glow of light from under our belly and a red point of light shot away from the aircraft into the darkness ahead of us – the Hs 293 had been launched. I held my course and height, although by now we were coming under heavy Flak fire. Only seconds to go until a huge explosion ahead of us. Suddenly, the red light at the rear of the bomb was snuffed out, extinguished – we had lost the missile! There was no way of directing it any further. Full of rage and disappointment I continued towards our target determined at least to let him have a burst from the twin MGs in our nose, but the ship – a destroyer – was by now on full alert and was firing back. I hauled the Dornier into a hard climb out of the danger zone, curving into a tight turn southwards and home. We were starting to feel a little safer when suddenly tracers flashed past our ears – at that moment our *Bordfunker* reported at least two twin-engine machines on our tail!'

A Sunderland of 201 Sqn captained by Fg Off Jimmy Wilson had an inconclusive combat with a Do 217 of III./KG 100, 9 August 1944.



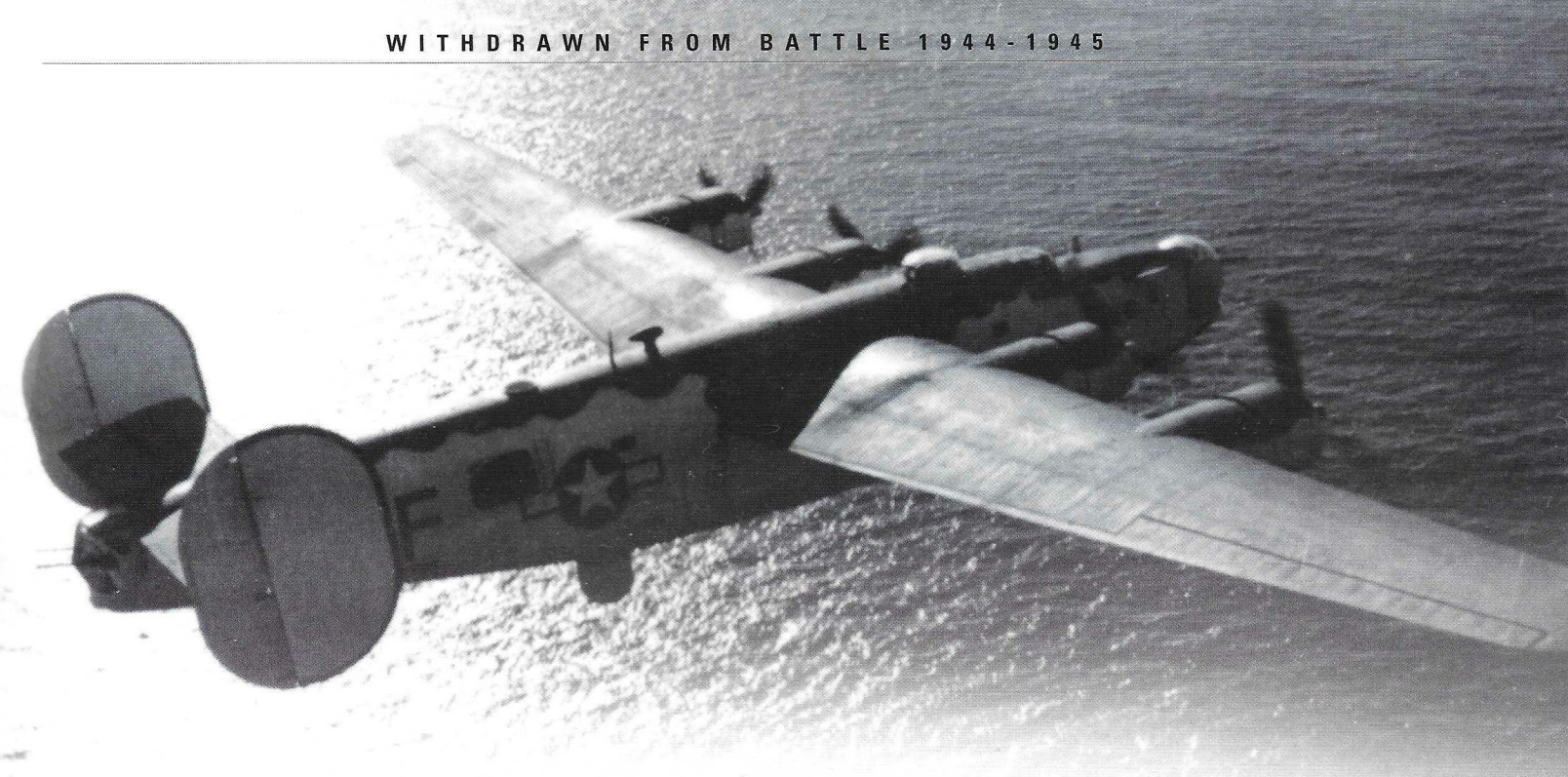
III./KG 100's attention now moved west, at least for the next eight days, but did not start well. On the evening of 9 August 1944, four Do 217 M-11s of III./KG 100, tasked with attacking destroyers between Lorient and St Nazaire, were intercepted by 11 Mosquitos of 235 Sqn led by Sqn Ldr Peter Barnes. They were escorting a Tsetse Mosquito (a Mosquito FB Mk XVII armed with a 57 mm Molins anti-shipping gun) of 248 Sqn flown by Fg Off Bernard Roberts DFC, the RAF aircraft being on an anti-shipping strike off the mouth of the Gironde; this is what happened:

'In the evening when flying over Cordouan Lighthouse at the entrance of the Gironde River sighted two planes flying low out over Mortagne-sur-Gironde, within seconds one was passing under Barnes' [Sqn Ldr P E Barnes] port wing before he recognised it as a Dornier. 'Two bandits ahead and below, attack, attack!' shouted Barnes over the RT. He then hauled his plane to port to chase the leading Dornier. The remaining ten Mosquitos broke to pursue the second. The Dornier ahead of Barnes increased speed with streaks of black smoke initiated as it headed out over the sea, jettisoning the glide-bomb which slammed into the water. Its pilot began evasive manoeuvres virtually at sea level. Barnes increased his speed at a distance 200 yds, opened fire with a short burst, the Dornier's gunner responded with tracer arcing below the starboard wing. On they flew, when the Dornier suddenly did a tight turn, causing Barnes to overshoot; he turned his aircraft around and gave chase finding the Dornier heading back towards Royan, with both engines smoking. The Dornier's gunner clearly had spotted him and so the pilot climbed then flicked his aircraft to the left and right then dived and began to pull her up, Barnes following each time. Barnes getting off several bursts of cannon and machine gun fire at the Dornier, then near the dunes he drew closer only to press the gun button and get no response – he was out of ammunition. The Dornier disappeared over Royan at rooftop level inland.

'Barnes and Clayton [Fg Off Dennis Clayton –Nav to Peter Barnes] looked around then spotted a third Dornier in the dusky light with two Dorniers ploughing into the water; pools of burning aviation fuel on a hazy blue sea.

'There were Mosquitos all over the place, it seemed, and didn't find out until we had touched down that two of our crews had attacked a fourth Dornier. One of them chased it inland, one short burst knocked out an engine, then as he closed within 150 yds he found that his 20 mm cannon didn't work – in the return fire a bullet had penetrated the pneumatic pipe. Five of our Mosquitos had received hits by the Dorniers but no one was hurt and the damage repairable.'

Two Do 217 M-11s were reported to have been lost between Les Sables d'Olonne and Penmarch, flown by *Uffz.* Erich Scheler of 7.*Staffel* and *Lt.* Armin Garbe of 8.*Staffel*; just Scheler and his *Beobachter* survived – the RAF crews reported seeing two dinghies, each with one person in them. There was also an inconclusive combat at 2155 hrs between one of the Do 217s and a Sunderland



of 201 Sqn captained by Canadian Fg Off Leonard 'Jimmy' Wilson, south-west of the Brest Peninsula. This is what the Allied crew reported:

> 'This patrol lay off and south-west of Brest Peninsula – clear weather. On patrol 2142 hrs; at just before dusk only 12 minutes later at 47N 03.16W while on course 165° True at 1,000 ft aircraft sighted flare and explosion near shipping three miles astern; an aircraft was also noted at 5,000 ft. This aircraft approached losing height to sea level proving to be a Do 217. Enemy aircraft came in to attack from aircraft's starboard beam; aircraft now dived in to starboard to meet enemy aircraft opening fire with tail, mid-upper and starboard galley guns at 800 yds range. Fire from enemy aircraft which broke away below. Aircraft levelled off at 1,200 ft turning to port bringing front turret and fixed guns to bear on enemy aircraft which had passed underneath and was returning on port bow. Enemy aircraft replied with rear guns and mid-upper using heavy MG and cannon. When out of range enemy aircraft circled and made off to port. Aircraft suffered no damage; enemy aircraft may have sustained several hits.'

A similar combat took place off Le Verdon at 1837 hrs the following night between a USN PB4Y-1 of VB-105 captained by Lt John Hitchcock, the American gunners claiming to have inflicted damage. In both combats nothing was recorded by III./KG 100 and the latter combat would be the penultimate Do 217 of III./KG 100 to be involved in combat with an Allied aircraft before the *Gruppe* returned to Germany eight days later.

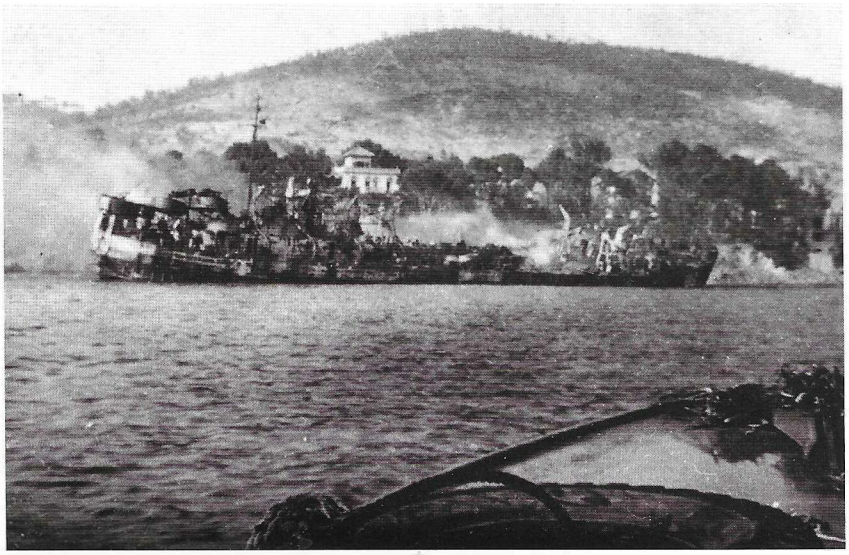
For the next few days, attacks were reported by Do 217s off the Gironde and up to Lorient and Brest but no aircraft were lost. Allied intelligence had heard that attacks on shipping were the intention 'for the next few days'. *Lt.* Werner Kirstenpfad was apparently credited with damaging a destroyer and landing craft on 11 August 1944, and then on 12 August 1944 an Hs 293 was launched against the *Dido* Class light cruiser HMS *Diadem* but missed. Little did the surviving III./KG 100 crews realise that, in six days, their unit would cease to exist as an operational *Gruppe*.

Following the Allied invasion of Provence in southern France ('Operation Dragoon'), on the evening of 15 August 1944 III./KG 100 was sent to attack shipping off St Raphael and claimed to have damaged or sunk three landing craft and a destroyer, one being credited to *Ofw.* Kube. Three aircraft were lost to Flak – the Do 217 M-1 of 7./KG 100 flown by *Ofw.* Rudolf Freiberg crashed in the sea off Pamplona and the crew were rescued by Spanish fishermen, together with the crew of the Do 217 K-3 of 9./KG 100 flown by *Fw.* Helmut Germann which crashed at Barbastro, Huesca in Spain; all were interned by the Spanish. The Do 217 M-11 of 8./KG 100 flown by *Ofw.* Rudolf Blab disappeared without trace. Hs 293s were credited with damaging LST 282 and LST 384 and a destroyer believed to be the command ship USS *Bayfield* (no warships or freighters were lost or damaged). However, LST 282 suffered a direct hit a few feet forward of the superstructure just off the centreline which then went through the main deck and exploded below, killing at least 40. The ship then caught fire and drifted ashore, a total wreck. III./KG 100 returned the following two evenings with no success, all the Hs 293s falling short or their signals being successfully jammed.

As this was going on, III./KG 100 was also carrying out limited anti-partisan missions, the first being by two aircraft on the morning of 15 August 1944 dropping SC 50 bombs and incendiaries north-west of Tanus. The *Gruppe* had carried out such missions as secondary tasks, when Hs 293 operations permitted, since just after the invasion. Two days later, three aircraft dropped ABB 250

On 10 August 1944, a similar inconclusive combat between a Do 217 and a PB4Y-1 of VB-105, captained by Lt John Hitchcock, occurred off Le Verdon.

The burning remains of LST 282 off St Raphael, 15 August 1944. (via Thomas)



Oberst Werner Baumbach commanded KG 200 from October 1944 until the end of the war.

Obstlt. Joachim Helbig. (via Taghon)

canisters on a suspected partisan camp near Lautignac, but the same day III./KG 100 was ordered to transfer to Germany and on 18 and 19 August 1944 it withdrew to Garz, where it was disbanded. Those ground crew who were unable to fly had to return by road where they were constantly attacked by the *Maquis* and suffered 300 casualties. III./KG 100's final loss came on 19 August 1944 when a Do 217 was shot down at Auzon in France on the way to Germany by Ensign Charles Hullard and Lt Edwin Castanedo flying F6 F-5 Hellcats of the US Navy unit VF-74. *Fw.* Wilhelm Krag, the pilot, and seven others were killed.

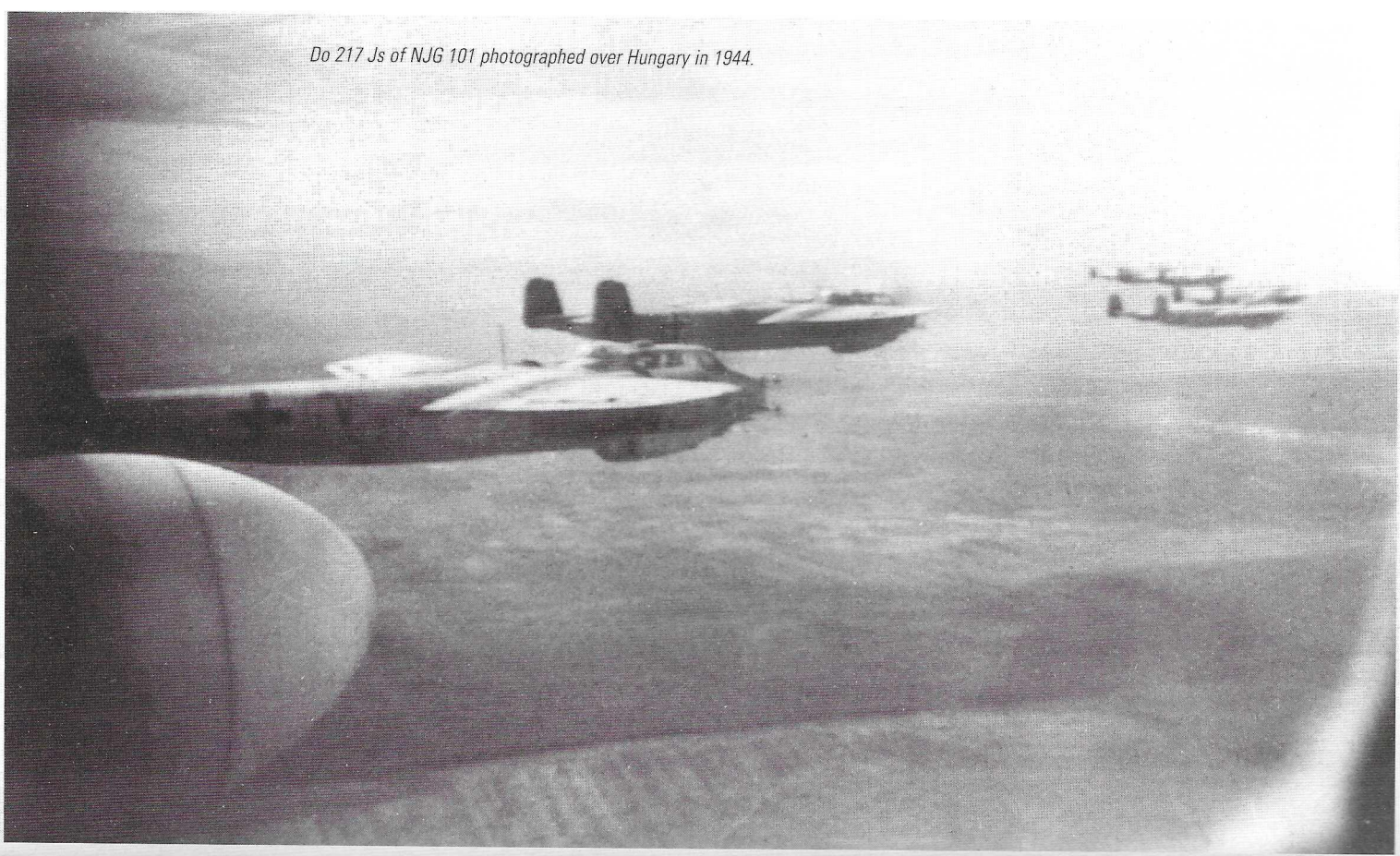
For the remaining nine months of the war, it is believed that some of III./KG 100's aircraft and crews were retained by *Hptm.* Ernst Hetzel's *Erprobungskommando* 36 which was renamed *Versuchskommando*/KG 200 at the end of 1944, by which time it was commanded by *Hptm.* Günther Eichholz. They continued to trial against ships both using wire-guided and camera-guided Hs 293s.

In January 1945, KG 200, led by *Oberst* Werner Baumbach, was tasked with slowing or halting the Soviet advance, which included destroying bridges over the Oder and Neisse rivers using whatever means they could – including Hs 293s, fighter-bombers, conventional bombers and *Mistel* piggyback bombers. It was not until the start of March 1945 that Baumbach, assisted by an equally experienced bomber pilot, *Oberst* Joachim Helbig, who was commanding *Lehrgeschwader* 1, felt that they were ready to attack, but fate – in the form of bad weather and a lack of fuel – intervened. On 10 March 1945, the unit reported that in addition to He 111s, Ju 88s and Ju 188s, it had nine Do 217s available to support attacks on bridges on 13 March, but the full details of what occurred are not known. Attacks were recorded on 20 March by three Do 217s and three He 111s against bridges over the River Neisse in the Görlitz area, but these failed in their aim. A similar attack the following day had the same result. By now *Versuchskommando*/KG 200 had just six Do 217s on its establishment but only four of them were combat ready. Another attack took place on 23 March 1945 but was thwarted by mist, Soviet fighters and intense Flak. Apparently, another attack took place on 25 March and then again on the night of the 26th, which included four Do 217s and four He 111s – again, the attack failed. It is believed that on the night of 11 April, three Do 217s of *Versuchskommando*/KG 200 flew their last mission attempting to hit bridges north and south of Görlitz, but their efforts were in vain. With only one Do 217 now being recorded as serviceable, it is unlikely that any further Hs 293 attacks by Do 217s were undertaken.

For the same period, the only units that appear to have been using the Do 217 in any meaningful operational role were 1., 2. and 4./*Nachtaufklärungsstaffeln* and II./NJG 101. II./NJG 101's last combat loss was on 17 September 1944 when *Oblt.* Hans-Joachim Beck in a Do 217 N-2 of *Stab* II./NJG 101 collided with a Soviet IL-4 of 10 GvAP DD flown by Guards Lt. Alexander Barinov, over the Mátra Mountains near Mátraballa, 130 km east of Budapest. This resulted in both aircraft crashing and the deaths of the German pilot and three of the Russian crew. One of the Russians bailed out but was then killed by troops on the ground. By this time, II./NJG 101 was flying a mix of aircraft types, predominantly the Ju 88, and would claim 20 more victories in the east by December 1944 but whether these were by crews flying the Do 217 is not known. With the lack of losses it appears that the Do 217s had been relegated to non-operational roles. The *Gruppe* would then claim three final victories in the west on the night of 16 March 1945 by *Lt.* Hans Rasper and *Lt.* Herbert Ludwig of 6./NJG 101, but both crews were flying the Ju 88; II./NJG 101 was then disbanded later that month.

The missions flown by the *Nachtaufklärungsstaffeln* were not as 'exciting', but still vital and to a lesser extent dangerous. By means of example, in June 1944 it was clear that the Soviet Army was planning a major offensive and, as a result, the Luftwaffe was attacking railways and railway stations, one of which was at Sarny on the Kiev-Warsaw railway, around 300 km west of Kiev and a similar distance to Minsk.

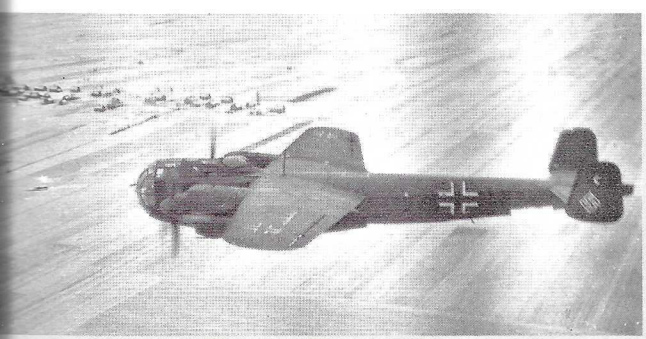
Do 217 Js of NJG 101 photographed over Hungary in 1944.



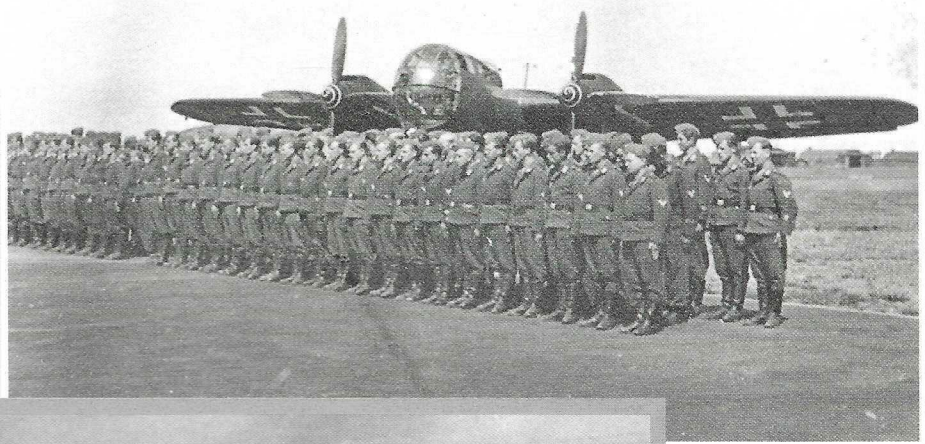
At 1700 hrs on 14 June 1944, *Lt.* Gerhard Ehlert and his crew from 2./*Nachtaufklärungsstaffel* were assigned to take photos of the railway and roads around Sarny following an attack the previous night. They took off from Baranowitschi in a Do 217 M-1, coded K7+FK – apparently the personal aircraft of their *Staffelkapitän*, *Hptm.* Paul Palmer, at around 2130 hrs and headed east. Approaching the target they climbed to an altitude of 1,500 m and prepared to take photos by using photoflash bombs, but the bomb doors failed to open and so they went down to 200 m for visual reconnaissance and reported via radio.

However, on their return flight the *Beobachter*, *Ofw.* Hanns Schlotter, became unsure of their location and flew into the range of a Soviet Flak battery, which quickly damaged the rudder. The last message that *Luftflotte* 2 heard from Ehlert and his crew was at 0115 hrs. The right engine had been hit first and burst into fire. They slowed down and gradually lost altitude. Ehlert was sitting in the front on the left, behind him the *Bordmechaniker*, about 50 cm higher than the *Beobachter*. This meant that their feet were not injured when they hit the ground, but the *Beobachter*, who sat lower in the cockpit, had his legs torn off in the crash-landing and he died almost immediately. Shrapnel had also hit the cockpit and mortally wounded *Uffz.* Karl-Heinz Williges (radio operator), but Ehlert had managed to land in the Pripet Marshes. He was able to climb out of the burning wreckage and *Fw.* Wilhelm Burr (flight engineer) also got out, but with severe burns to his hands and face. Both survivors wanted to get to the German lines, some 60 km to the west and, resting by day and walking at night, they attempted to escape. On the second day they tried to get some food in a village, but the villagers informed Soviet soldiers and they were soon captured. Gerhard Ehlert did not return home until December 1949.

Precise details of the operations flown by 1., 2. and 4./*Nachtaufklärungsstaffeln* are unknown but on 6 April 1945, 2./*Nachtaufklärungsstaffel* reported having five Do 217 Ms serviceable out of 5, as well as one Ju 188 D-2 and two Ju 88 A-4s, and 4./*Nachtaufklärungsstaffel* had two Do 217s serviceable out of a total of eight (the single Ju 188 D was unserviceable). That night, 2./*Nachtaufklärungsstaffel* operated three Do 217s, dropping 12 SD 70 bombs on vehicles south of Deutsch-Krone and strafing a vehicle on the road between Naugard and Stargard. The *Staffel* also dropped another eight SD 70s on vehicles at a railway station at Landsberg. Curiously, they also reported dropping 122,000 leaflets – but like the attempts to bomb, it was a case of too little, too late and a sign of desperation by the Luftwaffe, with the war having just one more month to go.

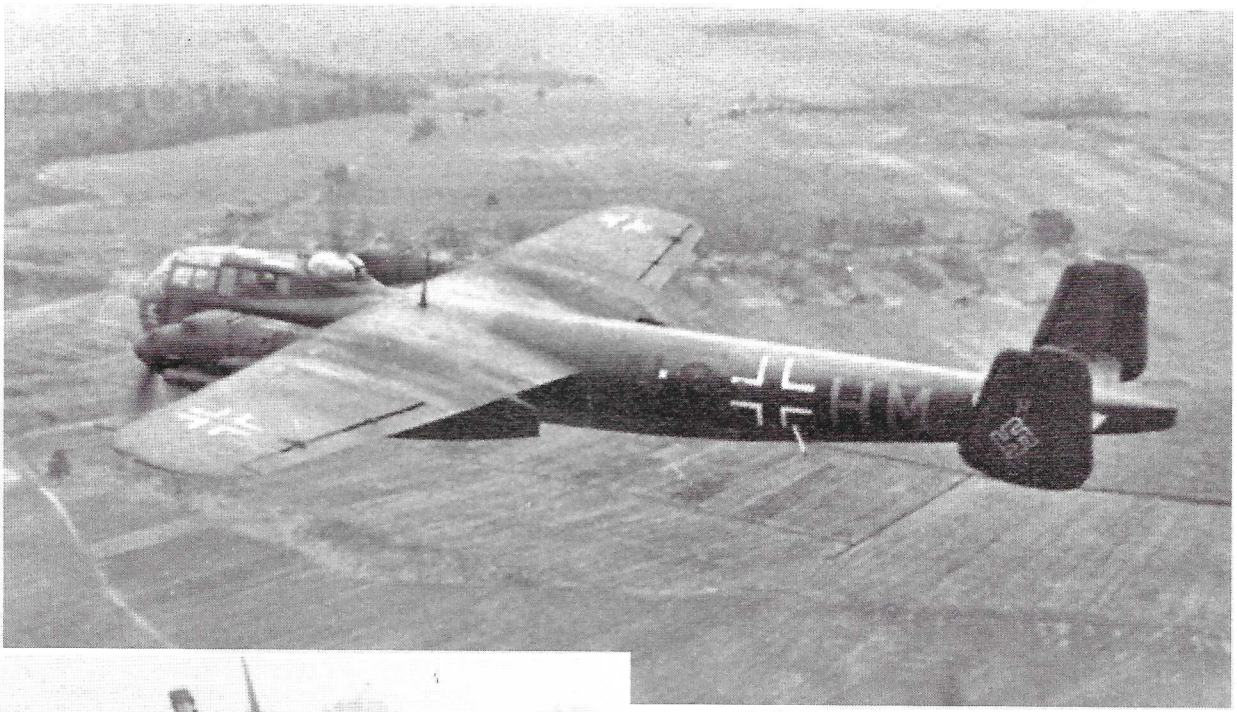


A Do 217 M-1 of 4./Nachtaufklärungsstaffel over a wintery Russian landscape, 1944. (via Davis)



Personnel from 4./Nachtaufklärungsstaffel formed up in front of a Do 217 M-1. (via Davis)

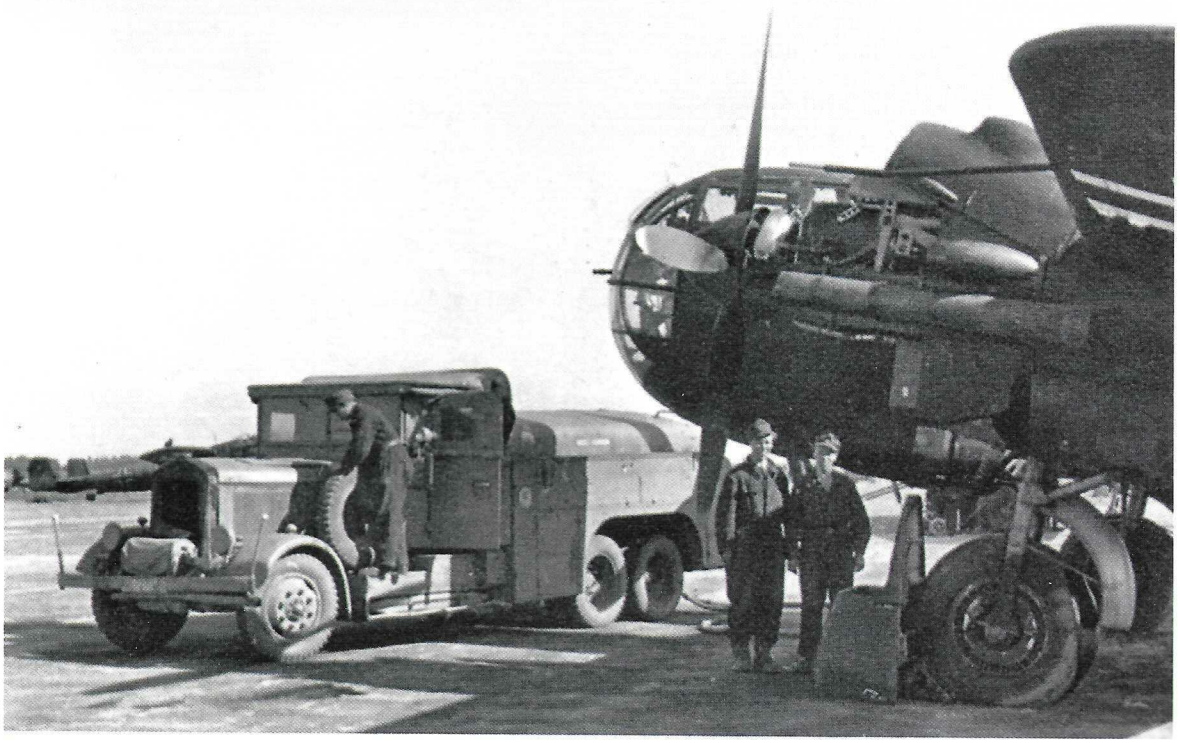
Loading BLC 50/A photoflash bombs to Do 217 M-1, K7+CM, of 4./Nachtaufklärungsstaffel. On 12 June 1944, it is believed that this aircraft, W.Nr. 326343, was reported missing off Finland. (via Davis)



Do 217 M-1, K7+HM It is believed that this aircraft, W.Nr 326411, was lost over Belarus 6 July 1944 in flight.

Working on a Do 217 M-1 of 4./Nachtaufklärungsstaffel. (via Davis)

Guarding a Do 217 M-1 of 4./Nachtaufklärungsstaffel in the Far North. Note the distinctive spinners. (via Davis)



Right: Refuelling a Do 217 M-1 of 4./Nachtaufklärungsstaffel. This unit remained operational to the end of the war. (via Davis)

Aircrew of 409 Sqn, Summer 1944. Sqn Ldr Dick Hatton (front row, 8th from left) who with his Navigator/Radar Operator Flt Lt Russ Rivers (front row, 7th from right) claimed a Do 217 near Rouen on the night of 1 August 1944.

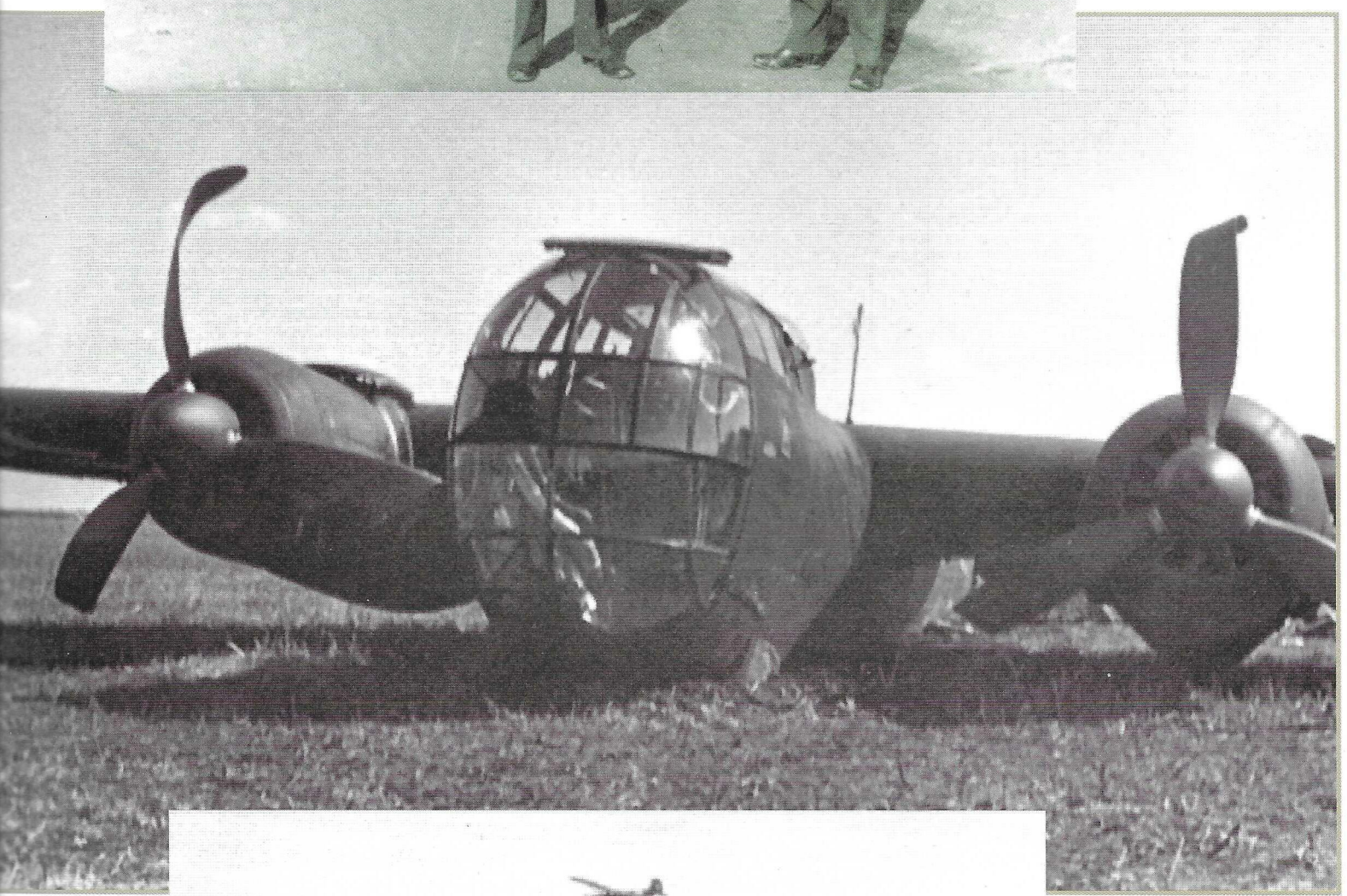
Hptm. Kurt Seyfarth of Stab./KG 2 briefing an attack on London, Soesterberg, early 1944.

At the same briefing, left to right: Hptm. Alois Hauser; ObstIt. Hanns Heise (Kommodore); Hptm. Kurt Seyfarth (Stab); Hptm. Hans Rasch; unidentified meteorologist.

Hptm. Alois Hauser continues the brief seen on previous pages.

Crews of I./KG 2 working on flight plans for an attack on London in early 1944.

Flt Lt John Hall and Fg Off Jock Cairns of 488 Sqn (see page 120) who accounted for the Do 217 M-1 flown by Lt. Horst Anders on 21 January 1944.

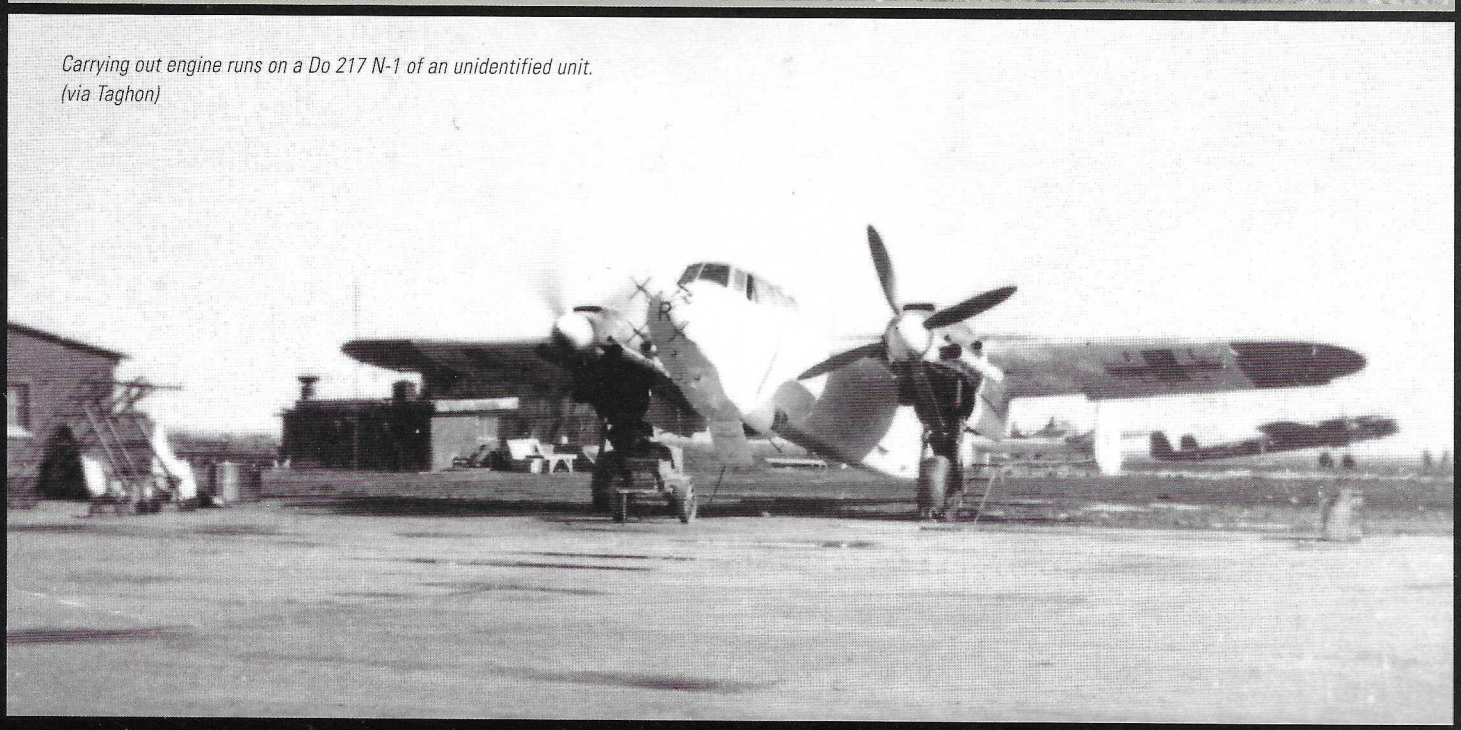


Unidentified Do 217 K-1 of 4./Nachtaufklärungsstaffel after a crash-landing, Eastern Front, 1944. (via Davis)

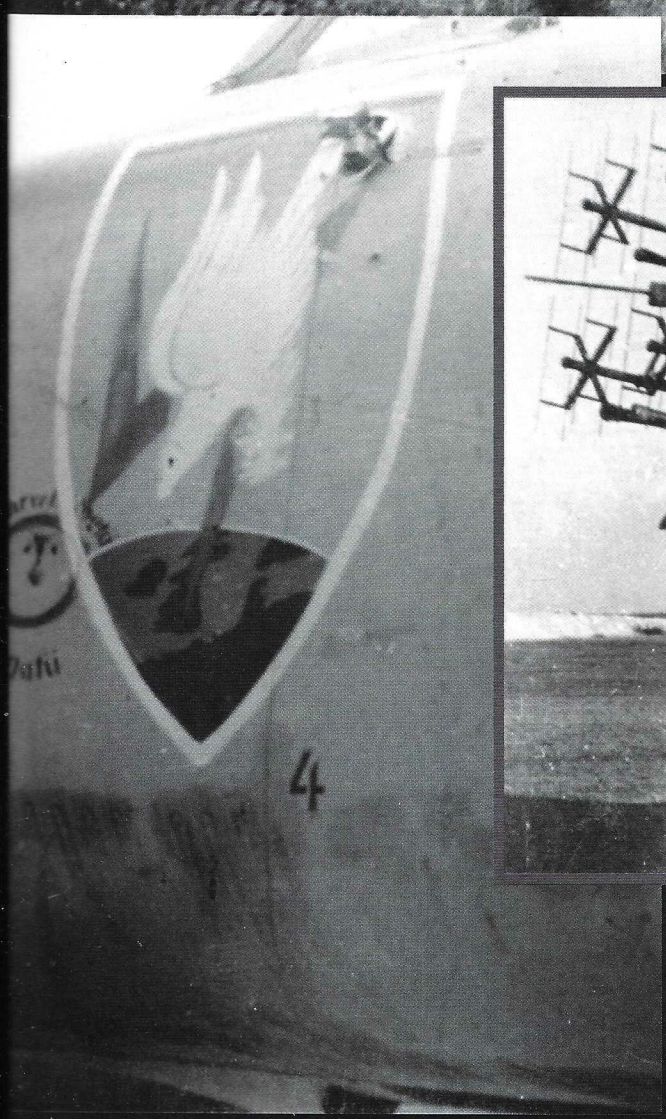
This Do 217 M-1, W.Nr. 40703, U5+CL, suffered minor damage returning from minelaying on 4 September 1943, Fw. Willi Sprinzing and his crew escaping injury. The aircraft would be lost over France in January 1944 returning from an attack on London. (via Saunders)

Do 217 N-1, NH+CM. On the nose is W.Nr. 91 – Do 217 N-1, W.Nr. 51491, was serving with III./NJG 1 on 1 February 1944 when it was damaged in an accident and 7./NJG 4, with code 3C+HR, on 2 April 1944, when it was destroyed crashing near Consenvoye, 15 km north-west of Verdun, killing Ofhr. Siegfried Voigt and his two crew. (via Taghon)

Carrying out engine runs on a Do 217 N-1 of an unidentified unit. (via Taghon)

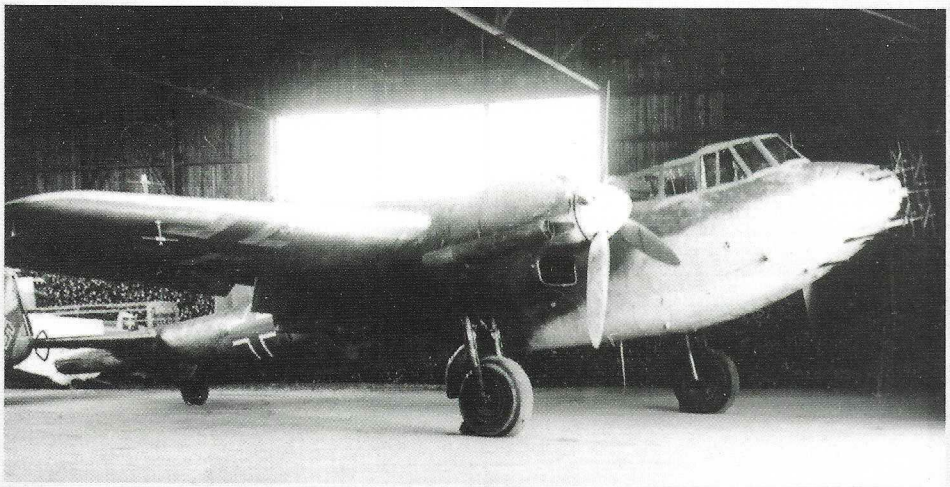


Do 217 N-1, W7+RP, of 6./NJG 101, 1944. Note the different coloured cowling, sourced from another aircraft and note the very heavy exhaust staining. A Ju 88 G nightfighter can be seen in the far background. (via Taghon)



Above: Nose of a Do 217 N-1 of an unidentified unit showing the last two numbers of the Werknummer, radar comprising FuG 202 'Lichtenstein' BC antennas and weaponry with muzzle flashes. (via Taghon)

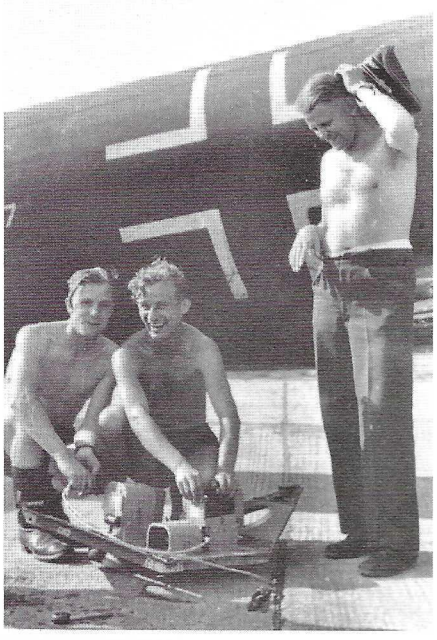
Left: Close-up of the 'England Blitz' badge seen on an unidentified Do 217 nightfighter captured on the ground at Melsbroek in Belgium, late 1944. Note what appears to be bullet damage in the top right corner of the badge.

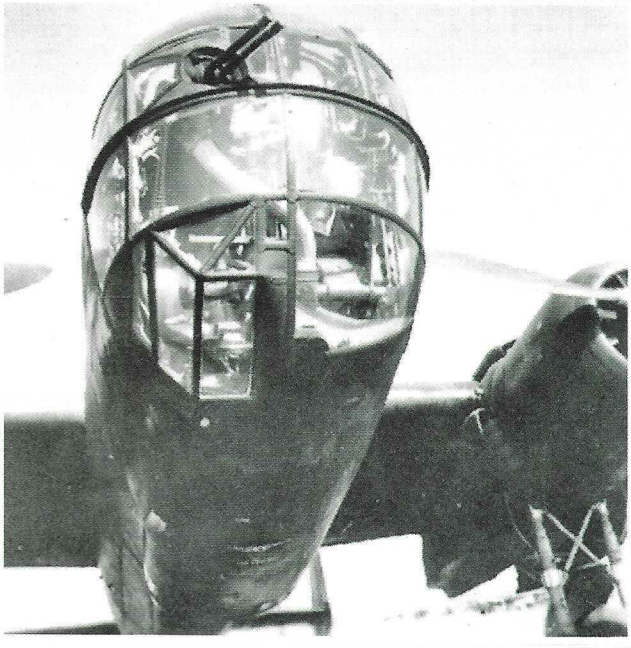


Do 217 N-2, W.Nr. 1570, 3C+IP, of 6./NJG 6 became lost on a training sortie from Taveaux on 2 May 1944 and landed at Basel-Birsfelden in Switzerland where Fw. Günther Konzac (pilot), Uffz. Arthur Ruprecht (radio operator) and Ogefr. Alfred Elster (gunner) were interned. The aircraft was not returned and was scrapped after the war.

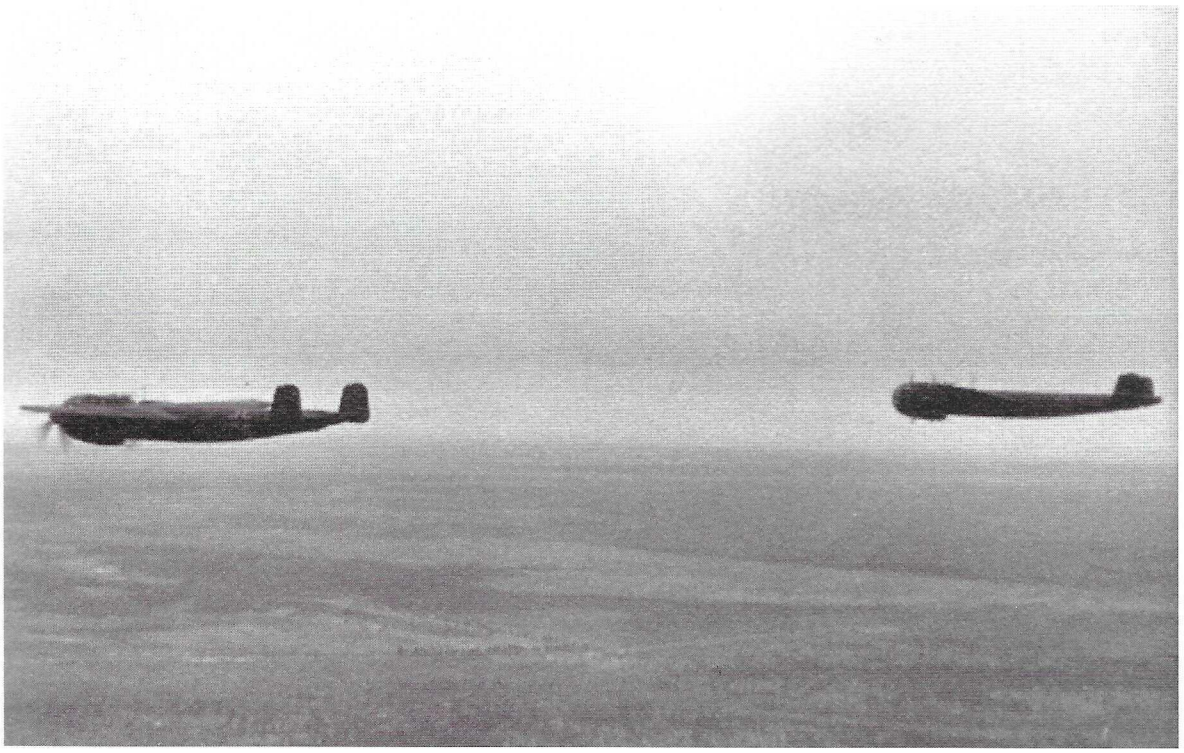
Right: Ground crew working on Do 217 M-1, W.Nr. 426343, K7+CM, of 4./Nachtaufklärungsstaffel. On 12 June 1944, this aircraft was reported missing off Finland. Uffz. Johannes Glausch and his crew were all reported missing. (via Davis)

Below: Ground crew in front of a Do 217 M-1 of 4./Nachtaufklärungsstaffel, 1944. (via Davis)

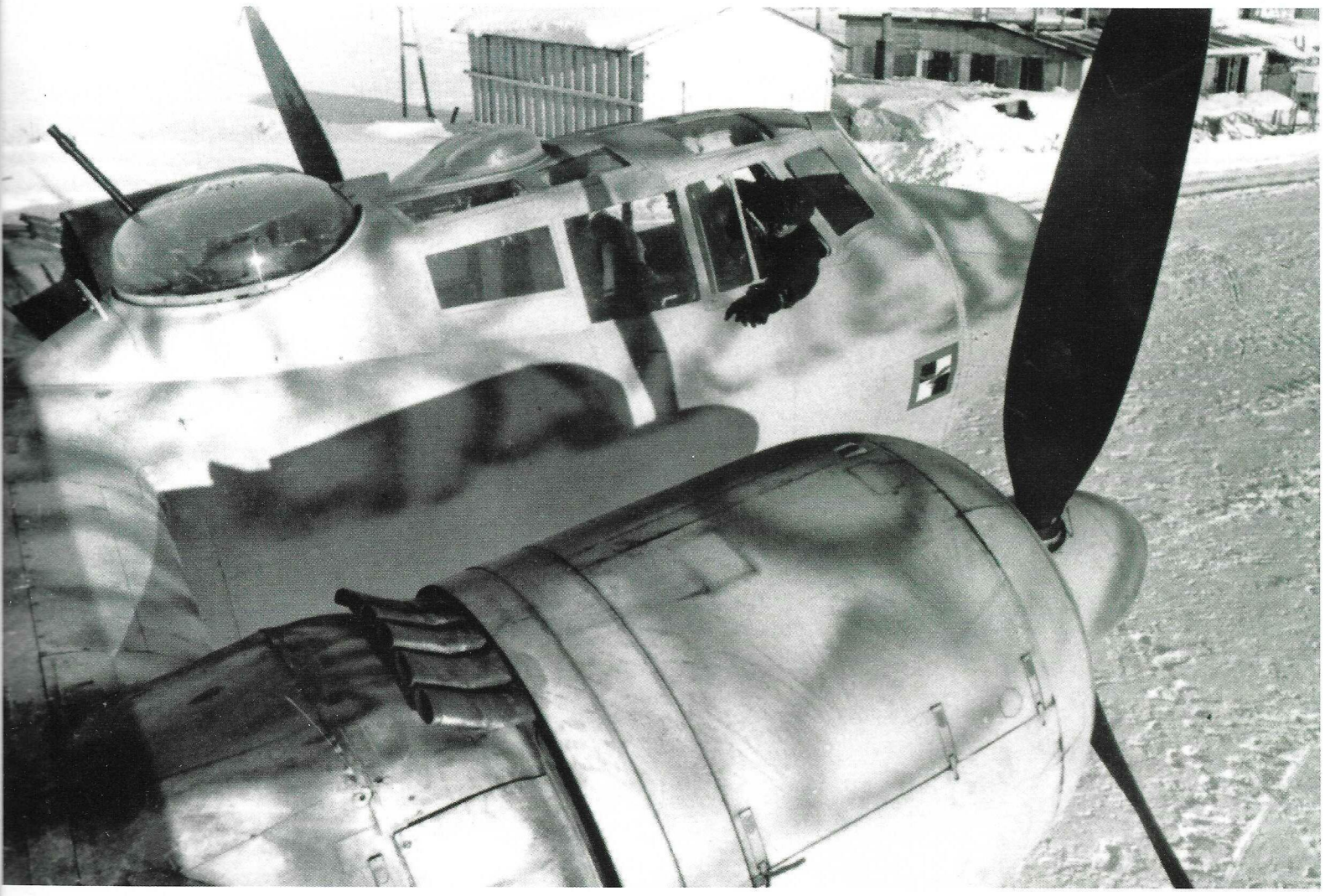




Above: Do 217 M-1 of 4./Nachtaufklärungsstaffel showing twin MG 81Z machine guns in the nose and the cartridge ejection chute snaking beneath, 1944. (via Davis)



Formation flying practice for Do 217 M-1s of 4./Nachtaufklärungsstaffel, 1944. (via Davis)

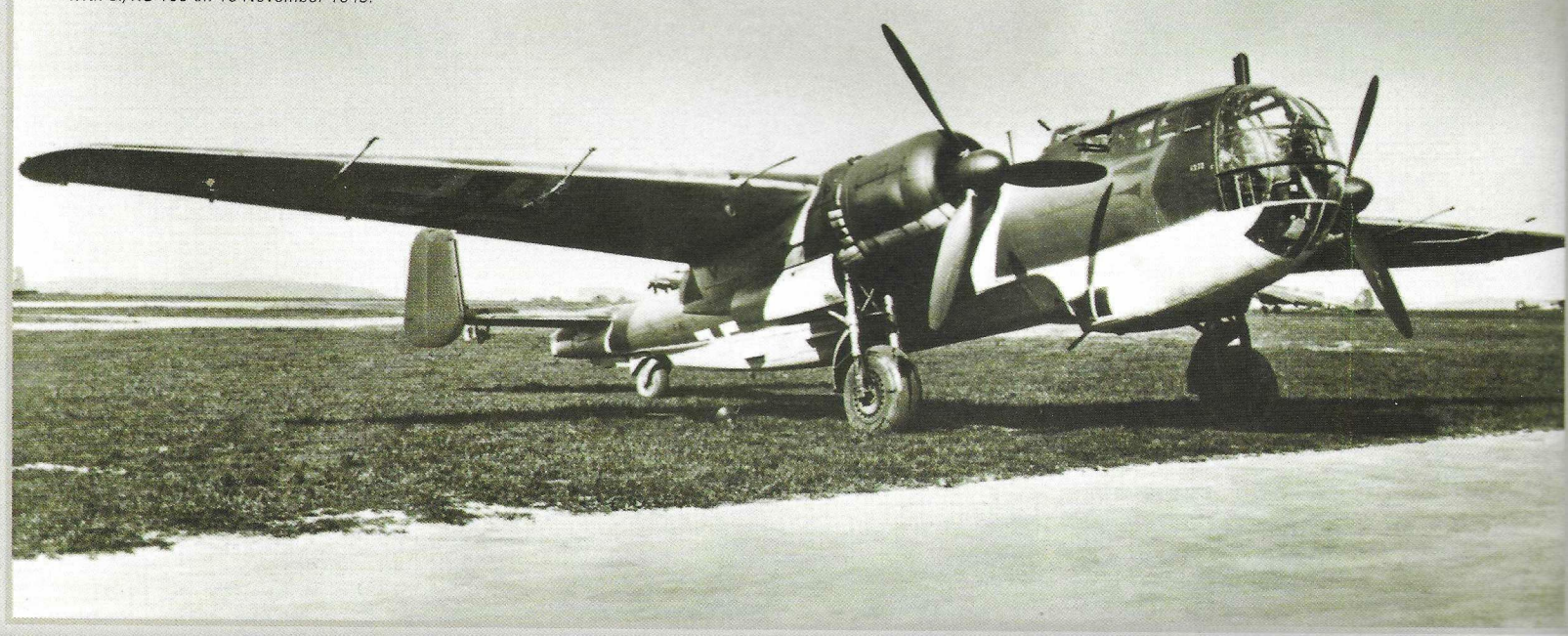


Do 217 J-2 used by General Josef Kammhuber of Luftflotte 5. This aircraft was coded N9+AA of Kurierstaffel Norwegen and reported as carrying codes CG+KW. It is believed that this photograph was taken in March 1944 at Alakurtti, Finland during an inspection of Nachtschlachtgruppe 8.

Above: Do 217 M-1, W.Nr. 56125, U5+UK. This aircraft was damaged in an accident at Eindhoven on 7 September 1943 and, following repair, became U5+CT of 9./KG 2. It was reported missing attacking Hull on the night of 20 April 1944; Ogefr. Hermann Wendt and his crew were all killed. The large piece of ordnance in the foreground on the cradle is an AB 1000-2 container, designed to carry multiple small incendiary and anti-personnel bombs, and flares.

Photographed at Brieg in the autumn of 1944 was this camouflaged Do 217 M-1 of 4./Ergänzungs Fernaufklärungsgruppe.

Do 217 K-2, W.Nr. 4572, showing its increased wingspan. This aircraft was reported being damaged at Kalamaki with 5./KG 100 on 15 November 1943.



Aircrew of 125 Sqn, RAF Hurn, May 1944. Centre is Wg Cdr Johnnie Topham DSO, DFC and Bar. Second to his right is Flt Lt Vernon Key who shot down Uffz. Richard Trollhagen of 7./KG 2 on 26 May 1944. First to his right is Sqn Ldr Bill Gill who shot down a Do 217 of III./KG 100 on the night of 4 July 1944.

Nemesis of the night-flying German bomber – the Mosquito. Seen here is NF Mk XIII HK480 of 264 Sqn, RAF Hartford Bridge. On 24 June 1944, this aircraft was damaged by anti-aircraft fire and is believed to have crashed 12 km south-east of Dives sur Mer, killing Flt Lt John Fox and Fg Off Cliff Pryor who are both still recorded as missing.

Do 217 N-1, C9+SW, of 12./NJG 5, 1944. The W.Nr. 509 is seen on the nose. The fuselage crosses and Swastikas have been painted out.

An aged Do 217 E-1 of FFS(C)5 with the W.Nr. 094 on the nose. It is possible that this was W.Nr. 5094 which was lost in an accident at Usadel, Tollensee on 7 February 1943, killing Lt. Harald von Lack and engineer Uffz. Walter Börner.

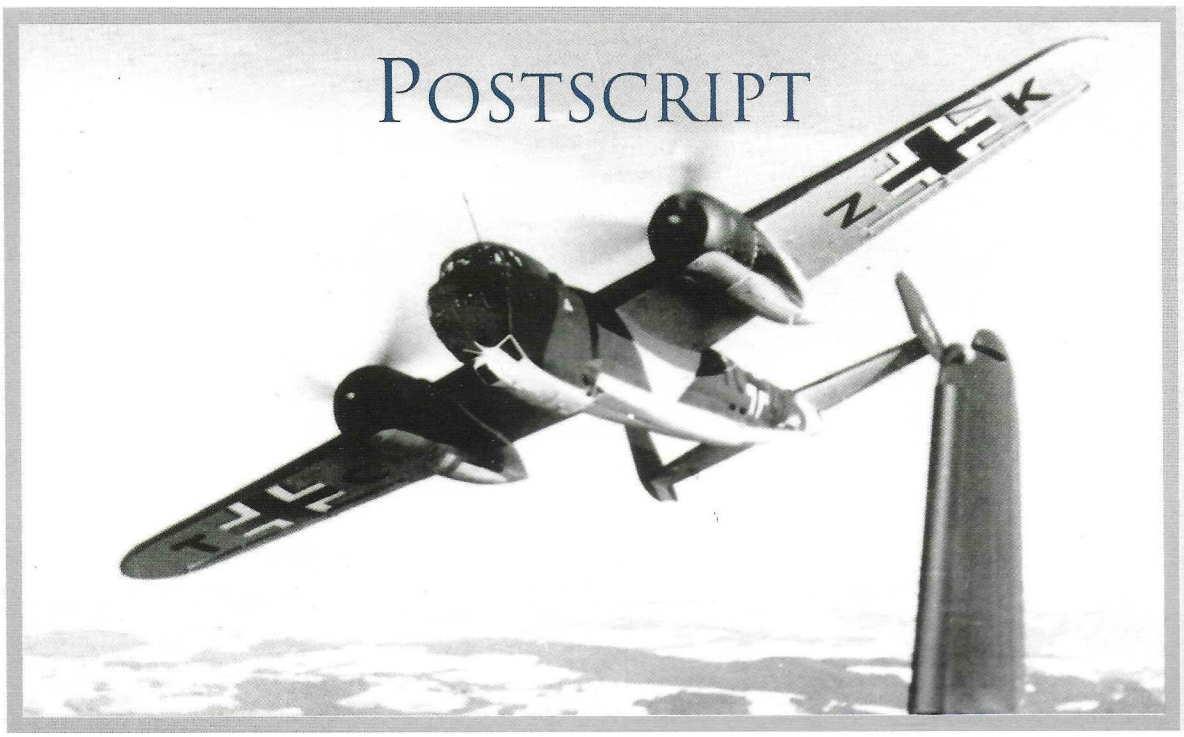
Do 217 E-4, W.Nr. 5369, of 3./Ergänzungs Zerstörergruppe Vaerløse. On 7 August 1942, this aircraft suffered an accident at Gilze-Rijen while with I./KG 2.

At last they can smile. Taken off operations, Hptm. Josef Steudel was given command of 11./KG 2. Uffz. Lohse (radio operator), Josef Steudel, Ofw. Gotthard Wachtel (radio operator) and Ofw. Heinz Schreiber (observer) at Rakoshegy, Budapest in August 1944. Note that two wear the German Cross in Gold (Steudel would be awarded the Ritterkreuz at the end of October 1944); three wear the Frontflugspange in Gold; while Steudel wears the Kreta (Crete) armband and, alongside his pilot's badge, the Bulgarian pilot's badge and the wound badge (for his accident on 5 November 1942). Wachtel also wears an early Bulgarian badge above his Frontflugspange.

Hptm. Josef Steudel (3rd from right) entertains Maj. Gottfried Buchholz, Gruppenkommandeur of IV./KG 2. Buchholz had been lucky to survive the war – a former member of the Legion Condor, he took command of 3./KG 2 following Hptm. Walter Krieger's capture on 10 July 1940. He was wounded in action on 26 August 1940 but remained in command until 30 November 1941 when he became Geschwader technical officer. Awarded the German Cross in Gold in May 1942, he took command of IV./KG 2 from Hptm. Helmut Powolny on 1 February 1943, remaining in command until it was disbanded in October 1944.

Hptm. Heinz de Wilde commanded 6.(F)/123 from April to September 1944. It was formed from 3./KG 66 and operated a limited mixture of Ju 88 S-1s, Ju 188s and Do 217 E-4s.

POSTSCRIPT



Where it all began – Do 217 E-1, W.Nr. 1037, TC+ZK, undergoing trials with Dornier. On 29 June 1941, it was badly damaged in a crash-landing at Lechfeld while being operated by II./KG 40.

ONGOING production of the Do 217 finished in October 1943 and after that further development ceased. It had been intended to have M-2 (torpedo), M-3 (dive-bomber), M-4, M-8 (high-altitude bombers), M-9 and M-10 (guided missile carriers) versions, but these projects did not make it off the drawing board or were cancelled. The only variant that just about made it was the Do 217 M-11, which was designed especially as a carrier for *Fritz* X and Hs 293 missiles, of which 40 aircraft were built. Even then, they were used operationally in very limited numbers by III./KG 100 over the Normandy beaches and southern France between June and August 1944. As usual with many late-war German aircraft, they arrived too late and in too small a number to make any significant difference against the Allies.

Compared to other aircraft types, not as much documentary or photographic material survived; one of the reasons for this is inferred in a recollection of German historian Franz Selinger:

> 'From 1943 onwards I was in charge of the technical work on instruction manuals for the modified Do 217 aircraft used for anti-shipping work with guided bombs and missiles and for nightfighting too. Unfortunately I had to burn all reports, manuals, photographs and drawings during the last days of the war.'

Hptm. Joseph Steudel of 8./KG 2, who flew the Do 217 from October 1941 to October 1944 and was awarded the *Ritterkreuz*, *Deutsches Kreuz in Gold* and *Ehrenpokal*, wrote of the Do 217:

> 'By July 1941, it was still not ready to be deployed to the Front. Many inadequacies were still to be discovered and it required constant changes, improvements and refitting. In all of the years of the war, we were hardly ever at full strength and escalating losses played a major role with this.'

However, many liked the bomber, as *Fw.* Günter Vestewig of 1./KG 2, who was shot down and taken prisoner on 8 March 1943, wrote:

> 'The Do 217 E was a very good aircraft. Its flying qualities were first class and without a bomb load one could almost fly a full aerobatic sequence with it – loops, rolls left, right, up and down. It only dropped 200 m before one again had full control and there was no spinning. It also dived very well without airbrakes.'

Former bomber pilot *Oberst* Viktor von Lossberg, who from late 1941 worked in the Luftwaffe's Technical Office, also wrote of the Do 217:

Hptm. Josef Steudel.

Left: Oberst Viktor von Lossberg at the controls of an He 111, and on the right in the above photograph.

Oberst Dietrich Peltz (2nd from left) appears to be having some firm words with the flyer at left, witnessed by other officers from KG 6. The officer wearing the Oakleaves to his Knight's Cross to Peltz's left is Maj. Hermann Hogeback.

Although trialled for torpedo-dropping, the Do 217 was not deemed suitable. Seen here is a K-1 from the torpedo trials unit at Gotenhafen.

'The Do 217, which weighed 17 tons, continued the air war against Britain alone after the start of the war against the Soviet Union and suffered heavy losses. For this reason, it ceased being employed as a bomber. *General* Kammhuber used the available capacity in order to establish additional nightfighter *Gruppen* using this type. Its speed was slightly higher than the Me 110 and Ju 88 and it was possible to fly it single-engined. However, it was too heavy to possess good climbing characteristics and it was not sufficiently manoeuvrable [to be a nightfighter].'

General der Kampfflieger Dietrich Peltz, a very experienced bomber and dive-bomber pilot and who led the *Steinbock* bombing campaign against the British Isles, wrote of the Do 217:

'We experience, demonstrably, 70 per cent of our losses during training, return flights and during transfer flights and only 30 per cent in engagement with the enemy. A Do 217 trainee pilot needs 30 per cent more flight hours before he is ready for front use than with any other type of aircraft.'

This, and the perceived unreliability of the BMW 801 engines, further limited the true effectiveness of the Do 217.

Finally, in February 1944, *Hptm.* Otto-Wolfgang Bechtle, a former member of *Stab* and 9./KG 2 who had flown the Do 17 from the start of the war and then the Do 217 after that, said publicly:

'It had been recognised in the case of the Do 217 that its defensive armament, which was admittedly stronger by comparison than that of other German bombers, represented no advantage in a total war and that its greater weight rendered evasive action more difficult and made it a readier prey to nightfighters when once they had tracked it down.'

So it was that by 1943, the Do 217's days were numbered, just over two years after its operational debut.

At the end of the war, the remains of Do 217s were found scattered over airfields around Europe, most of which appear to be from the *Nachtaufklärungsstaffeln*, and despite a number being captured intact, no examples of what British test pilot Capt Eric 'Winkle' Brown called 'the pregnant pencil' exist. For example, at Zeltweg in Austria, four Do 217 M-1s of 1./*Nachtaufklärungsstaffel* coded K7+DH (W.Nr. 3930), K7+IH (W.Nr. 3865), K7+HH and K7+FH (W.Nr. 3905) were found, while another coded K7+AH was found at Linz/Hörsching.

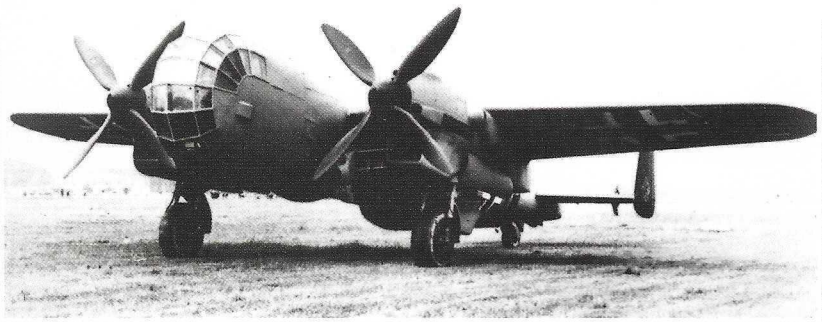
However, since the war, aviation archaeologists have excavated a number of crashed Do 217s, the most notable of which was discovered by the author in a private wood near Fernhurst in West Sussex in 1978. This turned out to be the Do 217 E-4 W.Nr. 5526 coded U5+EH, which was flown by *Fw.* Güther Vestewig of 1./KG 2 and which was shot down by a Beaufighter of 29 Sqn while attacking Southampton on 8 March 1943. The remoteness of the crash site, on private land, meant that substantial, albeit smashed, remains of the aircraft survived. The author recalls finding a dinghy and masses of unexploded ammunition and it was clear that the bomb bay was just below the surface. In 1989, the RAF excavated the remains to recover two 500-kg bombs and five 50-kg bombs, the largest single cache of unexploded German bombs discovered in the United Kingdom since the Second World War. In 2005 a second dig was carried out to completely clear the site of aircraft remains (the site had become popular for

unauthorised souvenir hunters) and, if possible, to recover the remains of *Ogefr.* Franz Huske (flight engineer) who was still missing. His remains were found 20 feet down and in October 2006 were interred alongside the other member of his crew to be killed in the crash, *Ogefr.* Hans Witkopp (radio operator), at Chichester.

The last words on the Do 217 aircraft go to test pilot Capt Eric Brown, who in 1975 wrote:

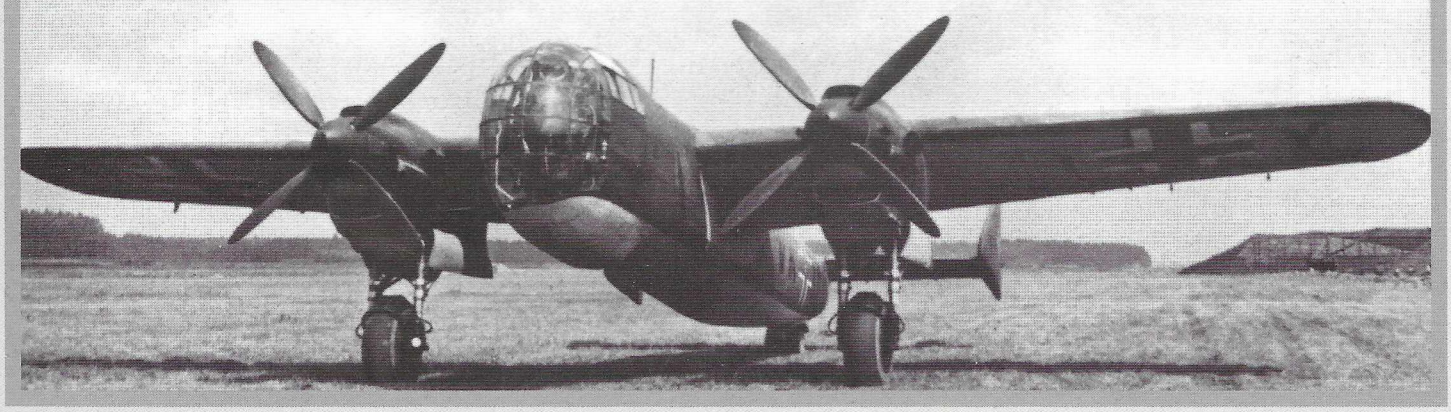
'Writing an epitaph for this last of the Dornier bomber line to see combat [Do 217 M], one would perhaps say that it had been a moderate aircraft which established an undistinguished but honourable operational record.'

Left: Do 217 K-03, KE+JC, was used as a test bed for the DFS 228 high-altitude rocket-propelled aircraft.

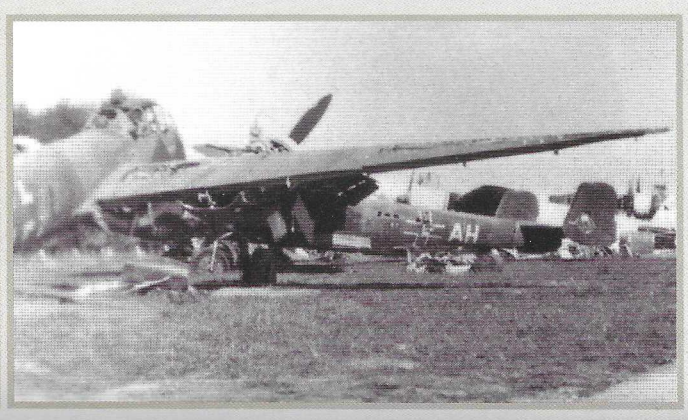


Left and above: Do 217 PV1, W.Nr. 1229, BK+IR, was designed as a high-altitude bomber with a pressurised cockpit and powered by two DB 603N engines with a DB 605 booster. It first flew on 6 June 1942, but by 1944 further development work was cancelled in favour of other types.

The Do 317 V1 prototype, VK+IY, was powered by DB 603B engines and had triangular tail fins. It was a contender for the next generation Luftwaffe bomber, the so-called 'Bomber B'; larger and more spacious than the Do 217, it first flew in September 1943 but further development was halted.

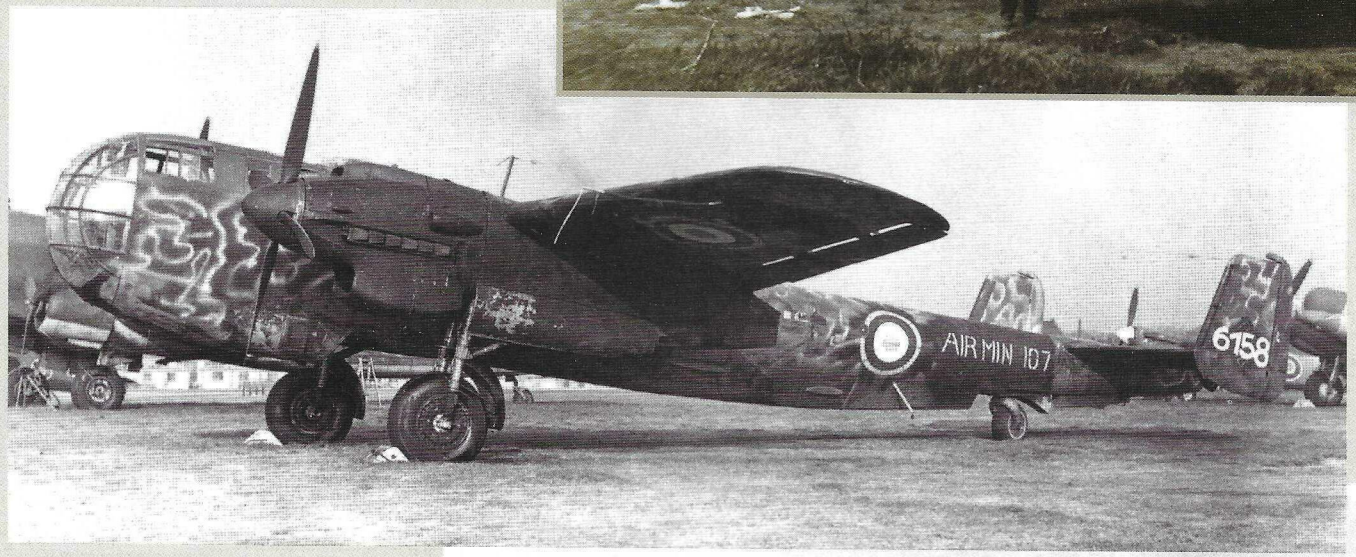


Below and right: This Do 217 M-1 was coded K7+AH of 1./Nachtaufklärungsstaffel and captured at Linz-Hörsching. Note the spirals on the spinners. It was later scrapped and can be seen on the dump at Linz-Hörsching below right.



At the end of the war, many destroyed aircraft were found on airfields used by the Luftwaffe. This shows the remains of U5+AM of 4./KG 2 at Gilze-Rijen. U5 was visible ahead of the cross and AM is seen in white on the port tail fin.

Below: Do 217 M-1, W.Nr. 56158, was believed captured at Odense (Beldringe) in May 1945. It is believed to have been from 2./Nachtaufklärungsstaffel. It was subsequently flown to Farnborough, given the code Air Min 107 and displayed, but by December 1945 it had gone into storage, first at RAF Brize Norton and then RAF Sealand. It was believed to have been scrapped at RAF Bicester in 1956.

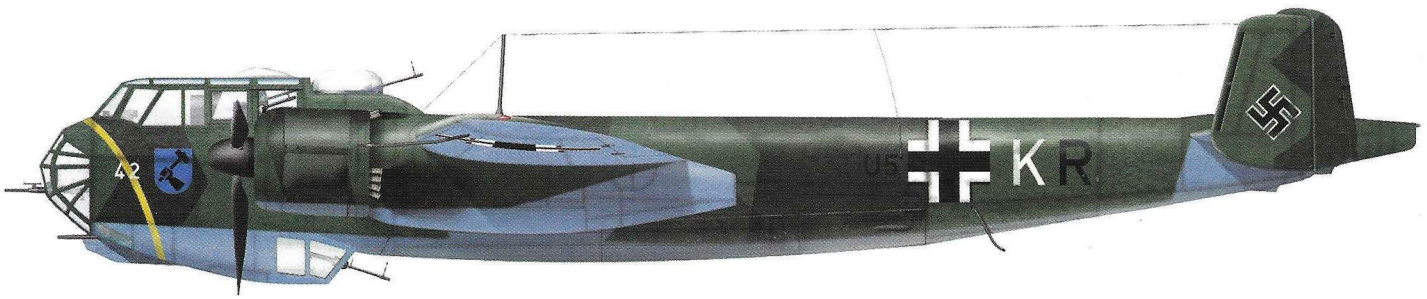


Below: This Do 217 M-1 was found at Prague-Ruzyne airfield. The code is EK which would probably mean it is from 2./Nachtaufklärungsstaffel, the full code being K7+EK.

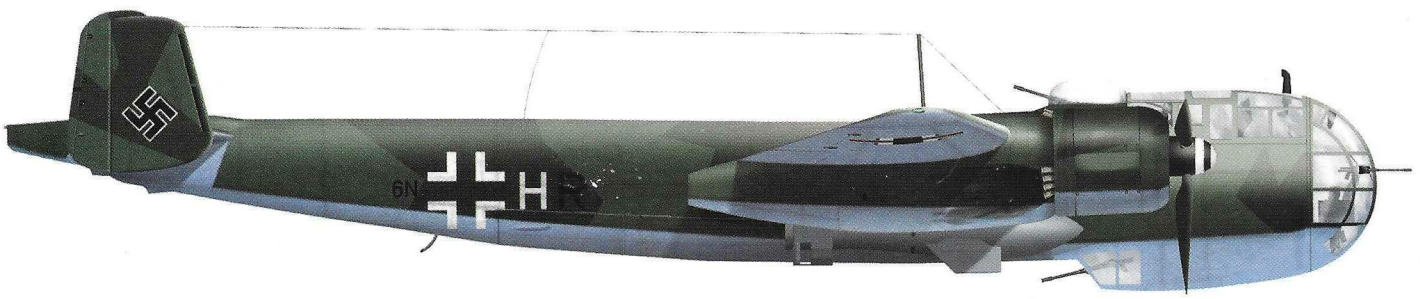
Below: Seen at Odense (Beldringe) in Denmark are three of six Do 217 M-1s captured there at the end of the war. On 1 May 1945, 2./Nachtaufklärungsstaffel moved to this airfield where it was captured. It has been stated that the middle aircraft was U5+HK, W.Nr. 56527; the letters +HK are visible on the fuselage. This aircraft was exhibited at the RAE Farnborough in October-November 1945 and designated as Air Min 106. Note that propellers and some rudders have been removed in accordance with the surrender protocols.

COLOURS OF THE DORNIER Do 217

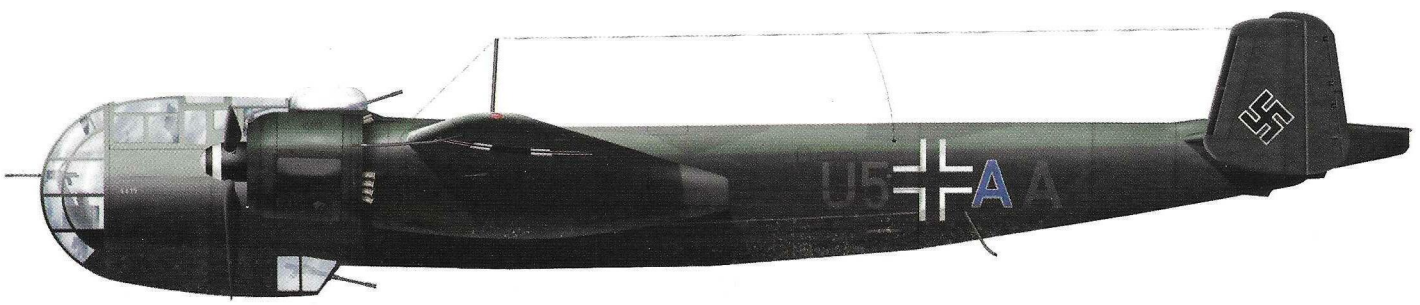
Dornier Do 217 E-4, W. Nr. 71 on nose in white, GG+PA, 1942
See page 12.



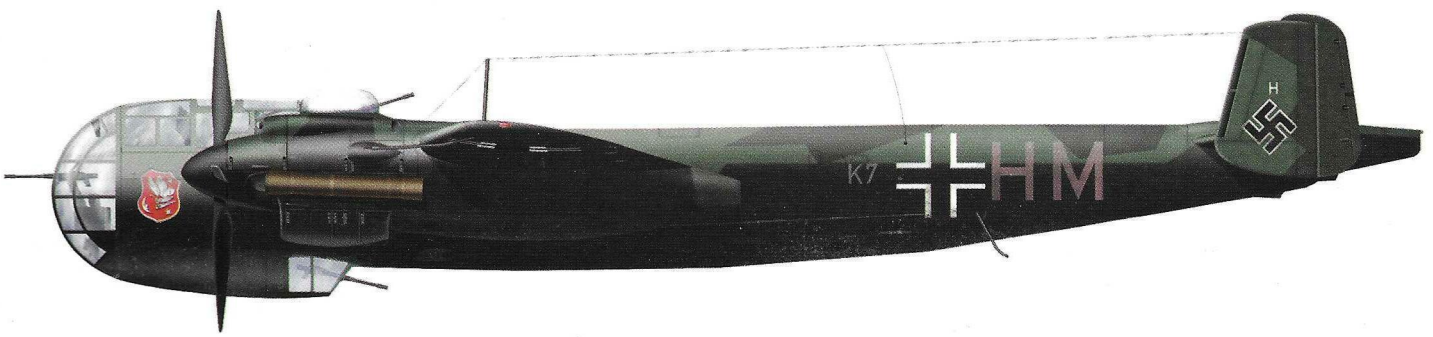
Dornier Do 217 E-4, 5342, U5+KR, 7./KG 2, Schiphol, February 1942
See page 27.



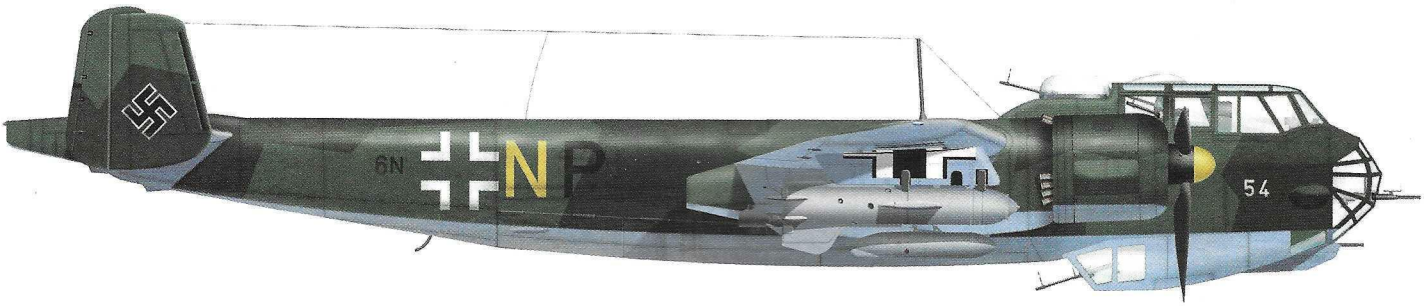
Dornier Do 217 K-2, 6N+HR, 7./KG 100, Istres, Summer 1943



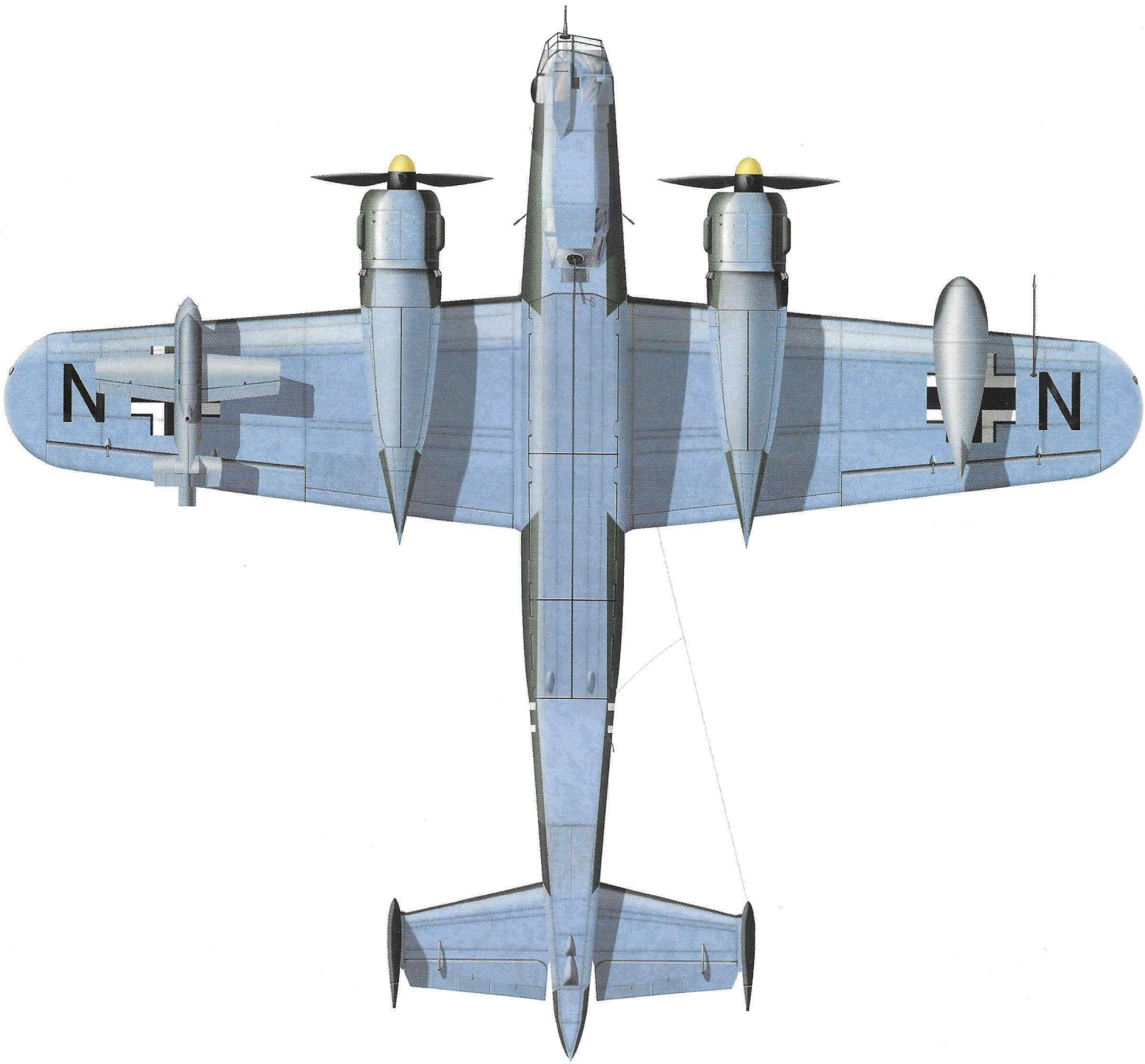
Dornier Do 217 K-1, W.Nr. 4415, U5+AA flown by Walter Bradel, KG 2, Soesterberg 1943
See page 106.

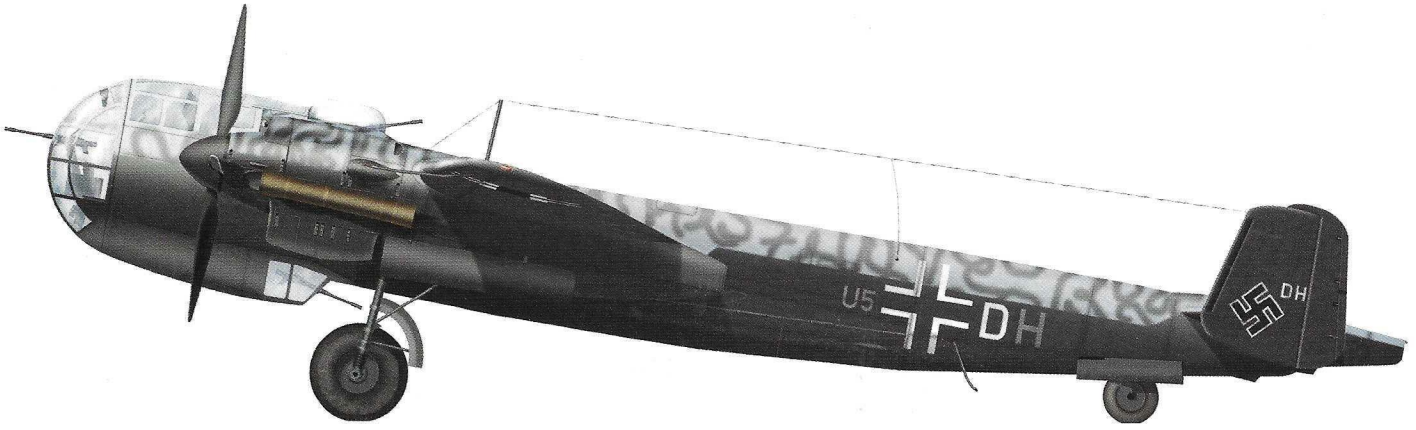


Dornier Do 217 M-1, W.Nr. 326411, K7+HM, 4./Nachtaufklärungsstaffel, 1944
See page 138.

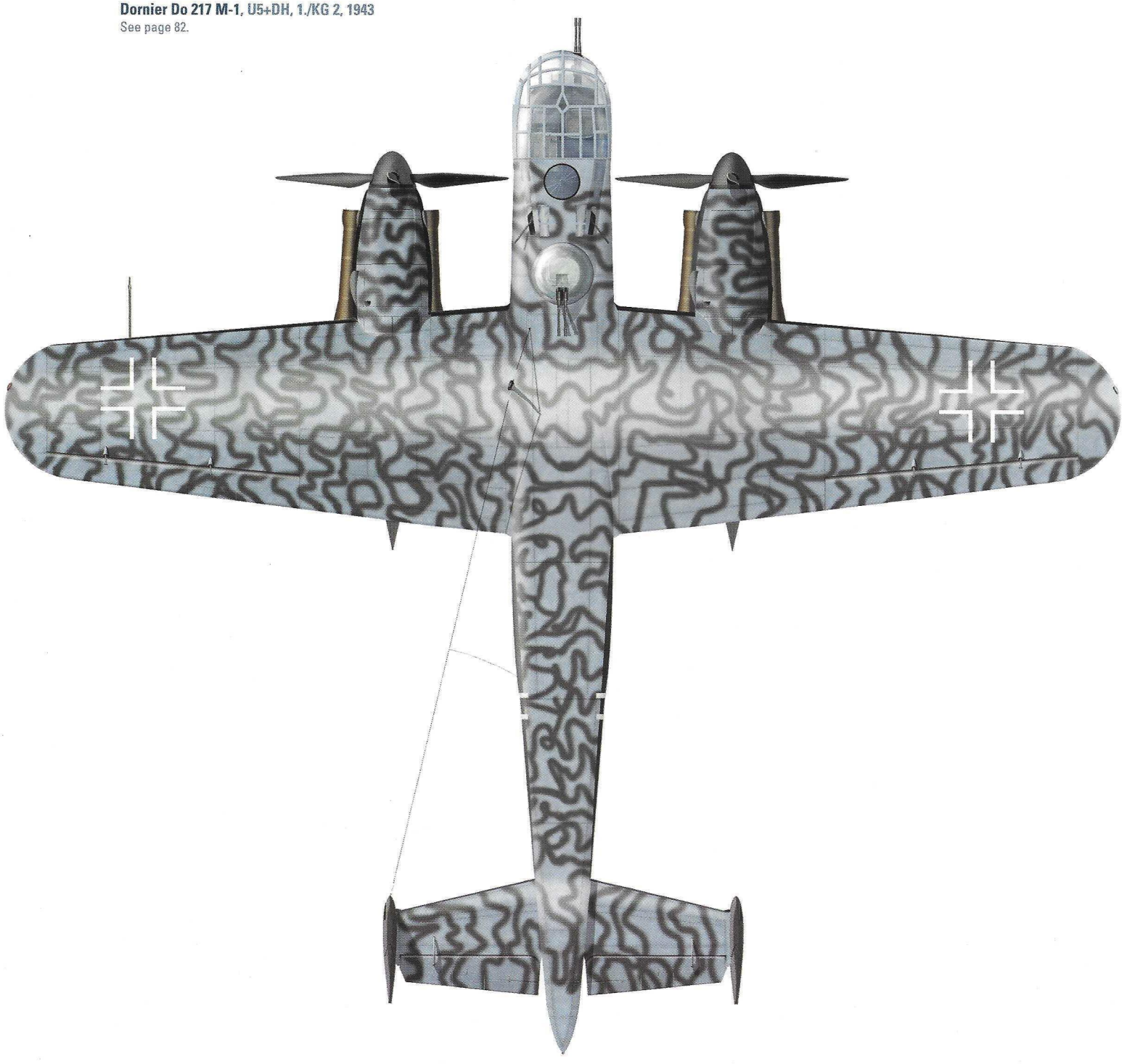


Dornier Do 217 E-5, 6N+NP of II./KG 100, possibly Garz or Karlshagen, autumn 1943
See page 70.

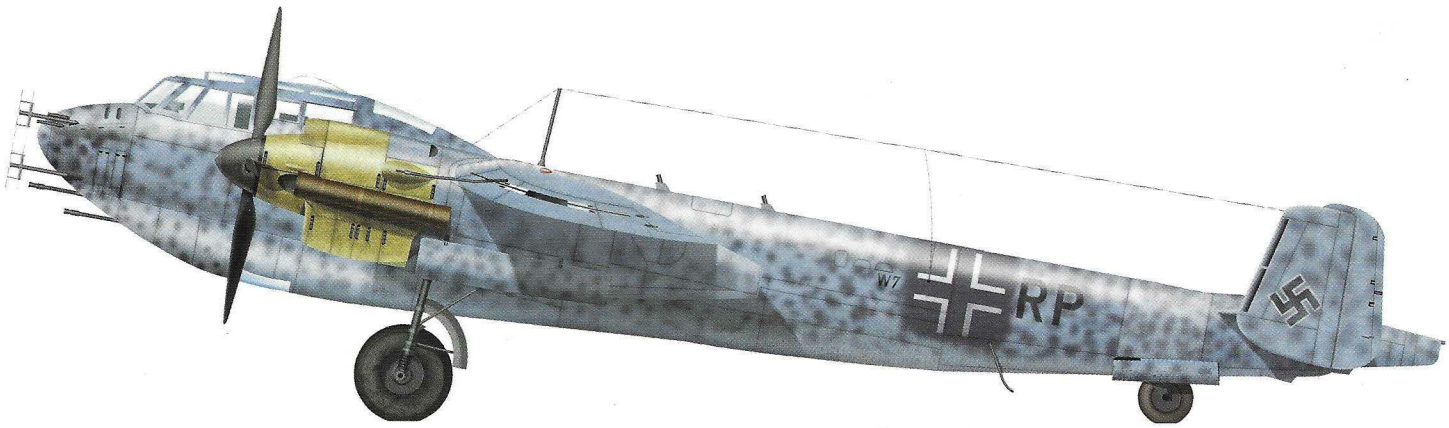




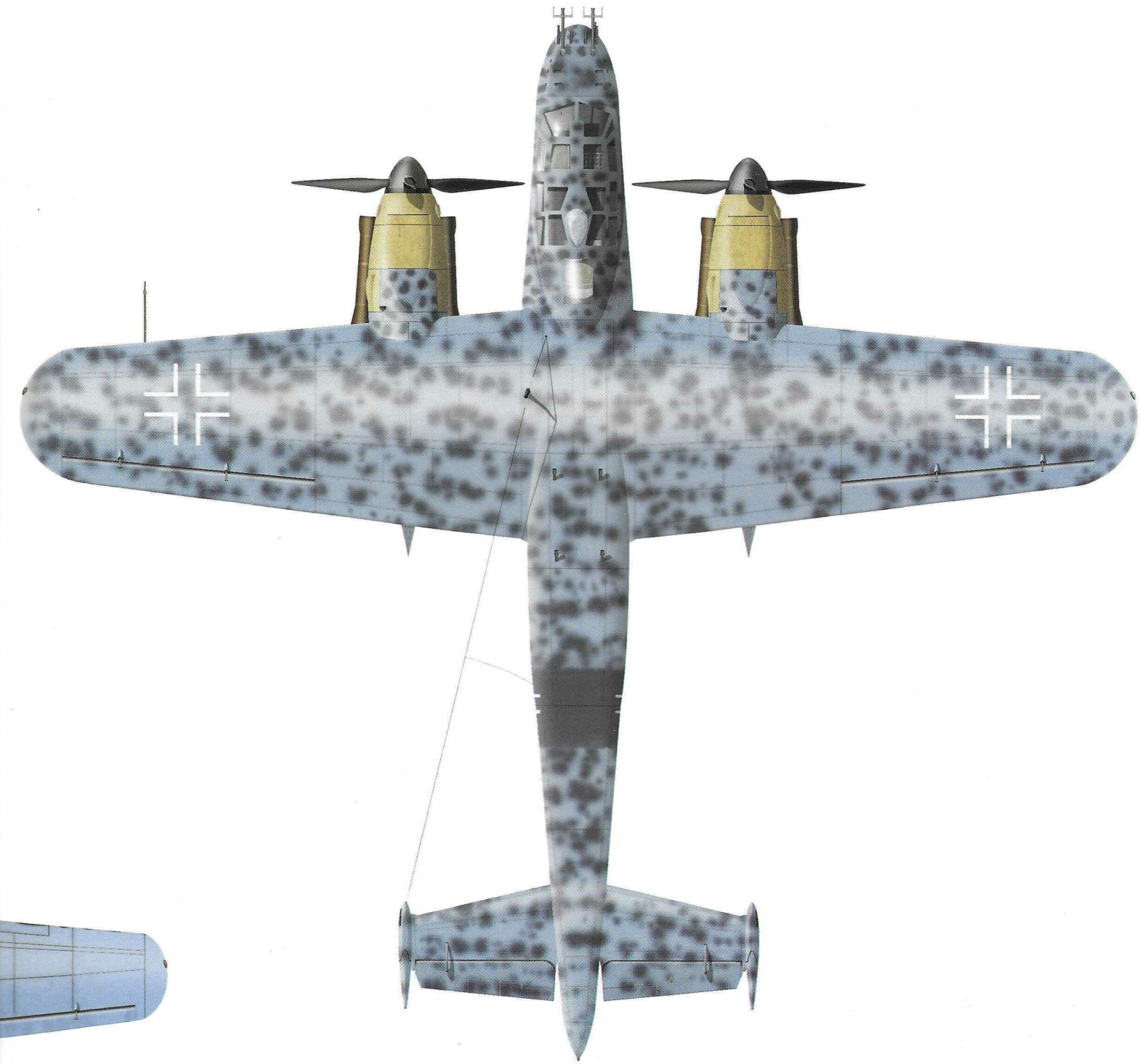
Dornier Do 217 M-1, U5+DH, 1./KG 2, 1943
See page 82.

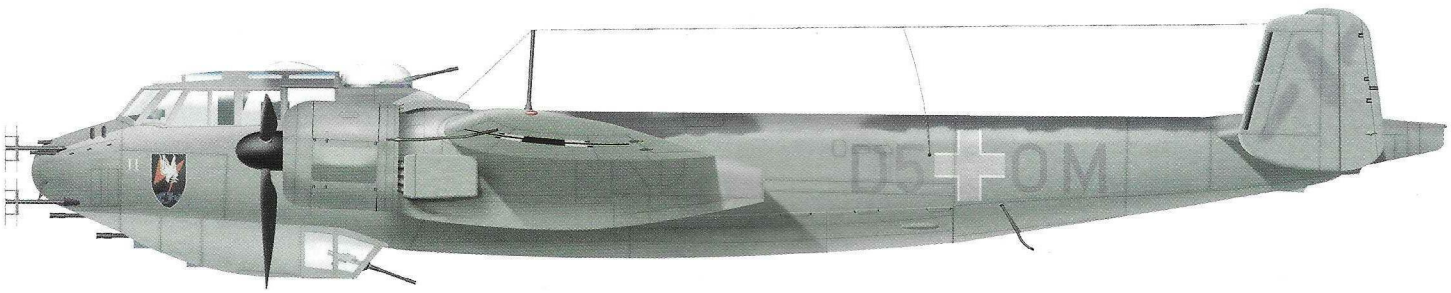


Dornier Do 217 K-3, 4716, 6N+IT, 9./KG 100, Orléans, France, April 1944

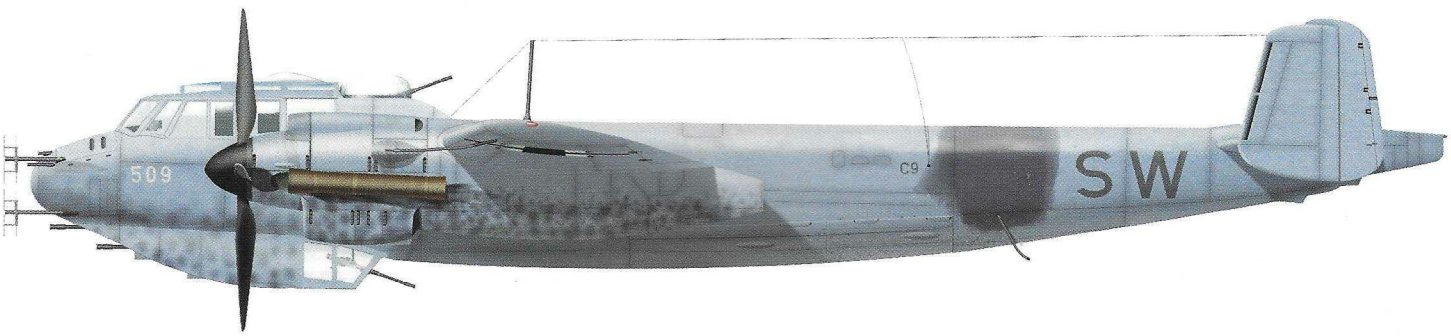


Dornier Do 217 N-1, W7+RP 6./NJG 100, possibly Krumowow, May 1944
See page 143.





Dornier Do 217 J-1, 1290, D5+OM 4./NJG 3, Schleswig, early August 1942
See page 68.



Dornier Do 217 N-1, C9+SW, 12./NJG 5, possibly Brandis, November 1943
See page 147.

APPENDIX ONE

Dornier Do 217 Combat Variants

E-1	BMW 801 MA-1	Bomber	Up to 7 x 7.92 mm machine guns, 1 fixed forward-firing 20 mm MG 151, up to 3,800 kg bomb load
E-2	BMW 801 ML	Bomber	3 x 7.92 mm machine guns, 2 x 13 mm machine guns (one fitted in a dorsal turret), 1 x fixed forward-firing 20 mm MG 151 or 1 x 30 mm MK 101, up to 4,000 kg bomb load
E-3	BMW 801 MA-1	Improved E-1	As E-1. Additional armour and weapons
E-4	BMW 801 C	Improved E-2	3 x 7.92 mm machine guns (or 2 x 7.92 mm machine guns plus 1 x 20 mm MG/FF), 2 x 13 mm machine guns, 1 x fixed forward-firing 20 mm MG 151, up to 4,000 kg bomb load
E-5	BMW 801 C	Hs 293 launcher	Defensive armament as E-4, up to 2 x Hs 293
K-1	BMW 801 ML & G	Bomber	Up to 4 x 7.92 mm machine guns, 2 x 13 mm machine guns, up to 4,000 kg bomb load
K-2	BMW 801 ML & G	Fritz X launcher	As K-1 (plus R23: 4 x 7.92 mm MG 81 in the tail cone), 2 x PC 1400X
K-3	BMW 801 ML & G	Hs 293/Fritz X launcher	2 x 7.92 mm machine guns, 3 x 1 3mm machine guns (plus R23: 4 x 7.92 mm MG 81 in the tail cone), 2 x Hs 293 or 2 x PC 1400X
M-1	DB 603 A-1	Bomber	As K-1
M-11	DB 603 A-2	Hs 293/Fritz X launcher	As K-3
J-1/J-2	BMW 801 ML-2	Nightfighter/intruder	Based on Do 217 E. 4 x 7.92 mm machine guns, 4 x 20mm cannons, 2 x 13 mm machine guns, up to 1,000 kg bomb load (Do 217J-1)
N-1/N-2	DB 603 A-1	Nightfighter/intruder	Based on Do 217 M. 4 x 7.92 mm machine guns, 4 x 20 mm cannons (plus R22: 4 x obliquely-mounted upward-firing MG 151 cannon); up to 400 kg bomb load (Do 217 N-1). Turret and bomb equipment removed to save weight (Do 217 N-2)

APPENDIX TWO

Known Do 217 Bomber and Reconnaissance Combat Units

KG 2

Kommodore

Oberst Herbert Rieckhoff	October 40	October 41	
Oberst Karl Mehnert	October 41	December 41	
Obstlt Georg Dr Pasewald	January 41	April 42	
Obstl Hans Von Koppelow	May 42	January 43	
Maj/Obstlt Walter Bradel	January 43	†5 May 1943	
Maj Karl Kessel	May 43	February 44	
Maj Hanns Heise	February 44	April 44	
Maj Wilhelm Rath	April 44	†22 May 44	
Maj Franz Schönberger	May 44	July 44	To Kdr. I./KG 2
Obstlt Rudolf Hallensleben	September 44	31 January 45	Disbanded

Stabsstaffel

Hptm Kurt Seyfarth	June 43	4 July 44	Disbanded

I *Gruppe*

Kommandeure

Maj Waldemar Lerche	August 40	August 41	
Maj Robert-Heinrich von Groddeck	August 41	Mar 42	
Hptm Otto Kettler	August 41	June 42	
Hptm Karl Kessel	June 42	May 43	To Komm. KG 2
Hptm Franz Schönberger	May 43	August 44	
Hptm Philipp von Alemann	August 44	3 October 44	Disbanded

1 *Staffel*

Hptm Walter Frank	August 41	†21 July 42	
Oblt Alfred Cornelius	July 42	†24 September 42	
Oblt Joachim Rücker	September 42	May 43	
Hptm Otto-Wilhelm Pöhler	May 43	†13 June 43	
Hptm Philipp von Alemann	June 43	August 44	To Kdr. I./KG 2
Oblt Otto Linnemann	August 44	3 October 44	Disbanded

2 *Staffel*

Oblt Rudolf Hellmann	September 41	†23 August 42	
Oblt Cornelius Holzamer	August 42	December 42	
Hptm Franz Schönberger	December 42	June 43	To Kdr. I./KG 2
Hptm Wilhelm Kunze	June 43	June 43	To 3./KG 2
Hptm Werner Stützel	June 43	3 October 44	Disbanded

3 *Staffel*

Oblt Gottfried Buchholz	July 40	November 41	
Hptm Heinrich Schmid-Hederich	December 41	†16 May 42	
Oblt Hans Reiss	May 42	W.11 June 42	
Oblt Joachim Rücker	July 42	September 42	To 1./KG 2
Oblt Erik von Loudon	September 42	December 42	
Hptm Werner Stützel	December 42	July 43	
Hptm Wilhelm Kunze	July 43	3 October 44	Disbanded

II *Gruppe* (converts to Ju 188 September/October 43)

Kommandeure

Maj Johannes Hübner	June 41	Nov 41	
Hptm Walter Bradel	December 41	January 43	To Komm. KG 2
Hptm Heinz Engel	February 43	June 44	

4 *Staffel*			
Oblt Helmut Voigt	November 41	†30 May 42	
Hptm Walter Bornschein	June 42	February 43	
Hptm Friedrich-Wilhelm Fahnert	February 43	April 44	
5 *Staffel*			
Hptm Heinz Engel	October 41	January 43	To Kdr. II./KG 2
Hptm Hermann Euler	February 43	†16 February 43	
Oblt Günter Näder	February 43	June 43	
Hptm Hermann Schröter	June 43	June 44	
6 *Staffel*			
Hptm Gerhard Czernik	March 40	†20 October 41	
Hptm Alfred Kindler	October 41	POW 31 July 42	
Oblt Karl-Ludwig Krüger	August 42	†19 August 42	
Oblt Heinz-Emil Middermann	August 42	October 43	To II./KG 100
Oblt Wolfgang Hankamer	October 43	June 44	

III./*Gruppe* (becomes V./NJG 2 December 1944)

Kommandeure

Hptm/Maj Gerhard Klostermann	September 41	†15 February 42	
Obstlt Hans von Koppelow	February 42	April 42	To Komm. KG 2
Maj Kurt Leythäuser	May 42	August 43	
Hptm/Maj Albert Schreiweis	August 43	29 April 45	Disbanded
7 *Staffel*			
Hptm Karl-Heinz Marten	October 41	†24 July 42	
Oblt Rudolf Graf Thun-Hohenstein	July 42	POW 8 August 42	
Oblt Rolf Häusner	July 42	†17 December 42	
Hptm Ernst Kalass	December 42	December 43	
Oblt Otto Schäfer	December 43	†4 January 44	
Hptm Wolfgang Brendel	January 44	†20 February 44	
Hptm Fritz Hauptmann	February 44	†27 April 44	
Oblt Peter Müller	May 44	29 April 45	Disbanded
8 *Staffel*			
Oblt/Hptm Erik von Loudon	June 41	September 42	
Oblt/Hptm Gerhard Guddat	September 42	November 42	
Hptm Walter Scheiner	November 42	July 43	
Oblt/Hptm Josef Steudel	July 43	June 44	
Oblt Ernst Andres	June 44	November 44	
Oblt Josef Felder	November 44	29 April 45	Disbanded
9 *Staffel*			
Oblt/Hptm Ernst-Augustust Walbaum	December 41	†22 Mar 42	
Hptm Hubertus Pieper	Mar 42	†25 May 42	
Hptm Helmut Powolny	May 42	June 42	
Hptm/Maj Helmut Kemmer	August 42	December 42	
Oblt Franz Holtz	December 42		†15 January 43
Oblt Otto-Wilhelm Pöhler	January 43	April 43	
Hptm Albert Schreiweis	April 43	August 43	To Kdr. III./KG 2
Hptm Max Pommerening	October 43	†23 October 43	
Oblt/Hptm Alois Magg	November 43	29 April 45	Disbanded

II./KG 40

(Formed January 1941 initially with He 111; becomes V./KG 2 with Me 410 June 1943)

Kommandeur

Obstlt Dr Georg Pasewaldt	May 41	October 41	To Komm. KG 40
Hptm Wendt Frhr von Schlippenbach	October 41	†8 April 42	

Hptm Waldemar Höner zu Drewer	April 42	†25 June 42	
Hptm Martin Kästner	June 42	June 43	
Adj			
Oblt Heinz-Emil Middermann	August 42	To 6./KG 2	
4 *Staffel*			
Hptm Paul Fischer		†5 June 41	
Hptm Friedrich-Wilhelm Methner		To Kdr V./KG 2	
Oblt Fritz Sengschmidt	End 42	June 43	Becomes 14./KG 2
5 *Staffel*			
Hptm Otto Kettler	January 43	Mar 43	To Kdr. I./KG 2
Hptm Karl Janoth?		†6 Mar 43	
Hptm Karl-Heinz Jüngling		April 43	
Hptm Wilhelm Schmitter		June 43	Becomes 15./.KG 2
6 *Staffel*			
Oblt Hermann Schröter		June 43	To 5./KG 2
Oblt Karl-Günther Näder		June 43	Becomes 16./KG 2
IV./KG 3 (July 43-February 44)			
Maj Paul Breu	October 42	May 44	
I./KG 66			
Kommodore			
Maj Hermann Schmidt	April 43	May 1945	
1 *Staffel*			
Hptm Rudi Mohrmann			
Oblt Alfred Stanke		POW 30 May 43	
2 *Staffel*			
Oblt Johannes Grotz		†7 October 43	
Hptm Walter Schmitt		†19 Mar 44	
3 *Staffel*			
Hptm Hans de Wilde			
KG 100			
Kommodore			
Maj Fritz Auffhammer	May 43	September 43	
Maj Bernhard Jope	September 43	20 August 44	Disbanded
II./KG 100			
Kommandeure			
Hptm/Maj Franz Hollweck	May 43	September 43	
Hptm Heinz Molinnus	September 43	†4 October 43	
Hptm Heinz-Emil Middermann	October 43	†16 February 44	
Maj Bodo Meyerhofer	May 44	†14 May 44	
Hptm Hans Molly	June 44	February 45	
4 *Staffel*			
Oblt Josef Flügge	September 42	May 43	
Hptm Georg Gaile		W.16 July 44	
Oblt/Hptm Friedrich-Wilhelm Weigang			
5 *Staffel*			
Hptm Wolfgang Vorpahl	October 42	11 June 44	
Hptm Hans Schacke	June 44	2 February 45	Disbanded

6 *Staffel* (becomes 8./KG 100 June 1944)			
Oblt Walter Seifert		†27 September 43	
Oblt Friedrich Wolf (Stellv)		POW 30 September 43	
Hptm Willi Scholl	April 43?	†20 April 44	
Oblt Siegfried Koezle	June 44	†10 June 44 with 8./KG 100	
Lt Siegfried Kynast (St Fhr)	June 44	POW 4 July 44	
Hptm Rudolf Noderer	July 44	January 45	
III./KG 100			
Kommandeure			
Hptm Ernst Hetzel	April 43	July 43	
Hptm Bernhard Jope	July 43	10 September 43	
Hptm Gerhard Döhler	September 43	December 43	
Hptm Herbert Pfeffer	December 43	†30 April 44	
Hptm Wolfgang Vorpahl	June 44	June 44	
Hptm Heinrich Schmetz	June 44	September 44	Disbanded
7 Staffel			
Lt Ernst Michelis (temp)	April 43	†19 September 43	
Oblt Erwin Rosengart		May 43	
8 *Staffel* (converts to He 177; new 8 *Staffel* formed from 6./KG 100 June 1944)			
Oblt Willi Silbersiepe	April 43	September 43	
Oblt Toni Lotter	September 43	April 44	
Hptm Rudolf Noderer	April 44	June 44	
Oblt Siegfried Koezle	June 44	†10 June 44	
Oblt Ignaz Sandner		†2 August 44	
Oblt Werner Kirstenpfad			
9 Staffel			
Hptm Heinrich Schmetz	April 43	April 44	
Oblt Helmut Dietrich		W.23 June 44	
Oblt Karl Lamp (St Fhr)	June 44	POW 21 July 44	
Hptm Klaus Hillerkus	June 44	September 44	Disbanded
KG 101 (February-September 43)			
I *Gruppe*			
Maj Josef Knotzer	February 43	August 43	
Maj Heinrich Herzberg	August 43	February 44	
II *Gruppe*			
Obstlt Albert Böhm	February 43	September 44	
Lehr-und Erprobungskommando 17 (becomes 15./KG 6 September 42, I./KG 66 April 43)			
Oblt Hans Becker			
Oblt Rudi Mohrmann		June 43	
Kampfgruppe zur besonderen Verwendung 21 (becomes Lehr-und Erprobungskommando 21 then III./KG 100 April 1943)			
Hptm Ernst Hetzel	August 42	April 43	
Lehr-und Erprobungskommando 36 (becomes Versuchskommando/KG 200 December 44/January 45)			
Hptm Ernst Hetzel	August 43	September 44	
Hptm Günther Eichholz	September 44	End	
Versuchsstaffel 293 (becomes Lehr-und Erprobungskommando 15 and then forms II./KG 100 May 1943)			
Hptm/Maj Franz Hollweck			

1 Nachtaufklärungsstaffel (converts to Do 217 Mar 42)

Hptm Günther Krause	October 42	May 1943
Hptm Wilfried Petersen	May 43	May 45

2 Nachtaufklärungsstaffel (converts to Do 217 December 42)

Hptm Hans-Eberhard Scholvin	October 41	† 29 January 43
Hptm. Wilfried Petersen	January 43	May 43
Hptm Paul Palmer	May 43	June 44
Hptm Heinrich Engelhardt	June 44	End

3 Nachtaufklärungsstaffel (receives Do 217 end of 1942; non-operational from May 1944 converting to Ar 234 and becomes 1.(F)/123 January 1945)

Hptm Ulrich Remmler ?		†9 February 43
Hptm Hans Rumetsch		† 10 Mar 43
Hptm Hans Felde	Mar 43?	January 45 († 11 February 45)

4 Nachtaufklärungsstaffel (receives first Do 217 end of 1942; fully converts mid-1943)

Hptm Paul Felder	September 43	May 45

4 (Nacht)/ Fernaufklärungsgruppe (May 43-January-45-formerly Erg.Nachtaufklärungsstaffel and became 6./Erganzungsaufklärungsgruppe 1)

Hptm Erwin Köck	February 44	Nov 44

Horch-und Störstaffel 2/ 4./Fernaufklärungsgruppe 5 (May-July 44)

Hptm Siegfried Rastedter	May 44	July 44

6.(F)/Aufklärungsgruppe 123 (April-September 44-formerly 3./KG 66)

Hptm Heinz de Wilde	April 44	September 44

II./Fernaufklärungsgeschwader 101

Maj Ludwig Wagenfeld	February 43	August 44
Hptm Otto Wüllenweber	August 44	September 44

APPENDIX THREE

Nightfighter units known to have operated the Do 217

UNIT	Komm/Kdr	From	To
II./NJG 1	Maj Walter Ehle	Aug 42	Sep 43
I./NJG 2	Hptm Rudolf Jung	Sep 42	Sep 42
II./NJG 2	Maj Helmut Lent	Jul 42	Mar 43
	Hptm Dr Horst Patuschka		
III./NJG 2	Hptm Herbert Bönsch	Jul 42	Sep 42
Erg./NJG 2	Hptm Albrecht Wolter	Jul 42	Oct 43
Stab/NJG 3	Maj Johann Schalk	Aug 42	Nov 42
I./NJG 3	Hptm Hans-Dietrich Knoetzsch	Jul 42	Oct 42
	Maj Egmond Prinz zur Lippe Weissenfeld	Oct 42	Jun 43
	Hptm Erhard Peters	Jun 43	Aug 43
	Hptm Walter Mylius	Aug 43	Jan 44
II./NJG 3	Hptm Günther Radusch	Jun 42	Mar 44
III./NJG 3	Obstlt Heinz Nacke	Jun 42	Jul 43

UNIT	Komm/Kdr	From	To
IV./NJG 3	Maj Erich Simon	Oct 42	Feb 43
I./NJG 4	Maj Wilhelm Herget	Sep 42	Oct 43
II./NJG 4	Hptm Heinz Griese	Mar 43	Jun 44
	Hptm Hans Autenrieth		
III./NJG 4	Maj Kurt Holler	Feb 43	Jun 44
	Hptm Hans-Karl Kamp		
II./NJG 5	Hptm Rudolf Schoenert	Jan 43	Aug 43
IV./NJG 5 (1st)	Maj Heinrich Prinz zu Sayn Wittgenstein	Dec 42	Aug 43
IV./NJG 5 (2nd)	Hptm Wolfgang von Niebelschütz	Oct 43	Jan 44
I./NJG 100	Maj Heinrich Prinz zu Sayn Wittgenstein	Aug 43	Aug 43
	Hptm Rudolf Schoenert	Aug 43	Jan 44
	Maj Alois Lechner	Jan 44	Feb 44
	Hptm Kurt Bonow	Mar 44	Jun 44
II./NJG 100	Hptm Ulrich von Meien	Jul 44	Oct 44
	Maj Paul Zorner	Oct 44	May 45
I./NJG 101	Hptm Theodor Rossiwall	Mar 43	Sep 43
	Hptm Günther Vowinkel	Sep 43	Dec 43
	Maj Fritz Herber	Jan 44	Aug 44
II./NJG 101	Maj Hans-Dietrich Knoetzch	Mar 43	Feb 44
	Hptm Fritz Schwab	Feb 44	Mar 45
6./NJG 101	Hptm Johann Krause	Apr 43	Dec 44
4./NJG 200	Oblt Horst Splittgerber	Aug 43	May 44
NJ Schule 1	Oberst Rudolf Stoltenhoff	Jun 42	Mar 43
Führerkurier-staffel	Hptm Walter Bornschein	Aug 43	Apr 44
	Hptm Paul Talk	Apr 44	May 45
Nachtjagdkdo Oberbefehlshaber Süd	Maj Adolf Koch	Sep 42	Nov 42
233a Squadrigila 59° Capt Giovanni Scagliarini Gruppo 41° Stormo Intercettori			Aug 43
235a Squadriglia 60° Cap Aramis Ammanato Gruppo 41° Stormo Intercettori		Sep 42	Aug 43

APPENDIX FOUR

Known Do 217 Bomber and Reconnaissance recipients of the Ritterkreuz

Name	Unit	Date	Fate
Hptm Rudolf Abrahamczik	**I./KG 2 Stab II./KG 40**	**29 Feb 44**	**Survived war**

Joined 3./KG 2 on the Eastern Front on 21 August 1941, he began converting to the Do 217 from November 1941 to April 1942. He then flew 50 missions over Britain, being shot down landing Do 217 E-4 W.Nr. 5381 at Gilze-Rijen on the night of 30-31 May 1942 by a Hurricane of 3 Sqn flown by Flt Sgt Colin Smith (who would go missing on operations eight days later); he and his crew were uninjured. On 8 September 1942, he moved to 6./KG 40 and then in May 1943 moved to be the TO of II./KG 40. When II./KG 40 converted to the Me 410 in June 1943, he joined 16./KG 2 and then took command of 14./KG 2 which, in February 1944, became 4./KG 51. He then was posted as an instructor commanding 12./KG 51 and in August 1944 converted to the Me 262, later taking command of 2./KG 51.

Oblt Ernst Andres	**8./KG 2**	**20 Apr 44**	**†11 Feb 45**

He joined 5./KG 2 from training in July 1941 which was, at the time, converting to the Do 217. He flew his first mission on 31 August 1941 and by October 1941, he had flown 20 missions. On 19 August 1942, he was shot down over Dieppe flying Do 217 E-4, W.Nr. 5461, U5+QN. The crew bailed out. Andres managed to swim ashore, but Ofw Harry Gohr (B) and Uffz Werner Baumgart (BF) were captured and Uffz Vitus Deubler (BS) killed. At the end of the year, he transferred to Stab./KG 2 where he flew with the Kommodore, Maj Walter Bradel. On the night of 5 May 1943, their Do 217 K-1 W.Nr. 4415 coded U5+AA suffered an engine failure returning from an attack against Norwich and it crash-landed near Landsmeer. Maj Bradel and *Flg* Werner Becker (BS) were both killed while Andres, *Ogefr* Wilhelm Schlagbaum (*B*) and *Uffz* August Dreschler (*BF*) were badly injured. Recovered, he returned to the Geschwader and in July 1944 took command of 8./KG 2. With the retraining of III./KG 2 as a nightfighter Gruppe, V./NJG 2, he joined II./NJG 4 taking command of 5./NJG 4 on 30 December 1944. On the night of 11-12 February 1945, his Ju 88 G-1 W.Nr. 710856 3C+FN was shot down in combat crashing near Uelde near Gütersloh. Andres, Fw Kurt Sauter (BF) and Ofw Gerhard Andra (BS) were all killed.

Maj Walter Bradel	**Stab./KG 2**	**17 Sep 41**	**†5 May 43**

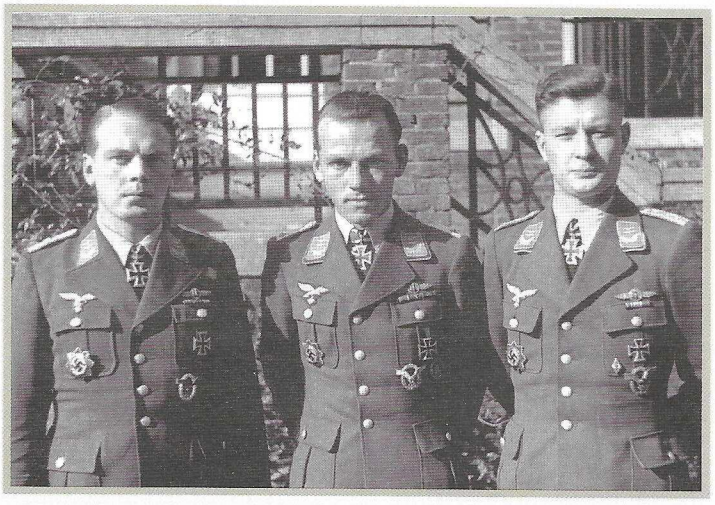
Joined the Luftwaffe in April 1934 and after training as a Beobachter, was posted to III./KG 153. He then served with K/88 in Spain after which he was posted to KGzbV 102, commanding 3 Staffel. He took part in the Norway campaign and was in one of the 13 crews which, on 13 April 1940, became lost in bad weather and running low on fuel, force-landed at Hartvigvann. After Norway, he was posted to Erg KGr 2 for retraining on the Do 17 after which he was posted to 9./KG 2 at the end of August 1940, taking command of the Staffel on 12 September 1940 with the rank of Hptm and replacing Oblt Bruno Davids. He led the Staffel for the remainder of the Battle of Britain and much of the Blitz. He then led it in the Balkans and Greece in April 1941 after which he flew over the Soviet Union from June 1941. On 1 December 1941, he took command of II./KG 2 which had by now converted to the Do 217 and was based at Evreux in France. Promoted to Major in September 1942 on 23 January 1943, Bradel took command of KG 2. On the night of 5 May 1943, his Do 217 K-1 W.Nr. 4415, coded U5+AA, suffered an engine failure returning from an attack against Norwich and crash-landed near Landsmeer. Bradel and Flg Werner Becker (BS) were both killed whilst Lt Ernst Andres (F),

Bradel with Lt. Otto Linnemann & Lt. Rudolf Streubel of 9./KG 2.

Ogefr Wilhelm Schlagbaum (B) and Uffz August Dreschler (BF) were badly injured. He was posthumously promoted to Oberstleutnant and was buried at the German Military Cemetery at Ysselstein.

Hptm Walter Bornschein	**4./KG 2**	**17 Sep 41**	**†27 Apr 1944**

At the start of the war he was a Beobachter with 4./KG 2 and flew over Poland and France. On 11 July 1940, his Do 17 Z W.Nr. 2542, coded U5+GM, of 4./KG 2 was intercepted off Harwich by a Hurricane of 85 Sqn flown by Sqn Ldr Peter Townsend. In the combat, the Hurricane was shot down and the pilot rescued while the Do 17 limped back to crash-land at Mory. Oblt Joachim Genzow (Staffelkapitän and pilot) was unwounded but Bornschein, Ofw Werner Borner (BF) and Fw Friedrich Lohrer (BM) were all wounded. Bornschein then retrained as a pilot and rejoined 4./KG 2 by which time it had converted to the Do 217. He took command of 4./KG 2 from 15 June 1942 to 15 February 1943 after which he went to a flying training school, but at the end of May 1943, he joined the Führer Kurier Staffel. On the night of 26 April 1944, his Do 217 N-1 was shot down while attacking bombers over Schweinfurt. Bornschein and his former crew from 4./KG 2, Stfw Wilhelm Steurer (BF) and Fw Josef Schmitz (BM), were all killed.



Schmitter, Bornschein, Sengschmitt. (via Green)

Name	Unit	Date	Fate
Ofw Peter Broich	**3./KG 2**	**24 Sep 42**	**Survived war**

He joined 3./KG 2 in March 1940 as an Unteroffizier. He flew his first operational mission on 10 May 1940 but on 27 May 1940, his Do 17 Z U5+CL was damaged in combat and he crash-landed near Trier with the wounded Gefr Helmut Heimann (BF). On 10 July 1940, his Do 17 Z U5+HL was damaged in combat with Spitfires of 74 Sqn or Hurricanes of 111 Sqn and he crash-landed back in France with Uffz Karl Meyer (BF) and Uffz Walter Süptitz (BS) wounded. Finally on 27 October 1940 his Do 17 Z, W.Nr. 3443, U5+HL was damaged in combat with Hurricanes of 1 Sqn during an attack on RAF Honington. Uffz Hans Ruttkowski (BM) was wounded. After action in the Blitz, Yugoslavia, Greece, Crete and the Soviet Union, he began converting to the Do 217 and recommenced attacks against Britain from May 1942. In August 1942, he became an instructor on 12./KG 2 and was commissioned as a Leutnant at the end of the year. He returned to 3./KG 2 at the start of June 1944 and on the night of 29 June 1944, his Do 217 M-1, W.Nr. 722942, U5+FL, was shot down by a night fighter at Goderville north-east of Le Havre. The crew bailed out, but Stfw Hans Ruttkowski (BM) was killed. When I./KG 2 disbanded, in October 1944 he moved to 7./KG 2 which became 13./NJG 2. He ended the war in command of 15./NJG 2.

Hptm Gerhard Czernik	**6./KG 2**	**16 May 41**	**†20 Oct 41**

Transferred to the Luftwaffe from the police in August 1935 and after training was posted to IV./KG 157. He then served in Spain with 1.K/88 and on his return, was posted to 6./KG 2, formerly IV./KG 157. He took command of the Staffel in March 1940 replacing Hptm Werner Fabig. On 14 May 1940, his Do 17 was damaged by Flak in the Sedan/Vouziers area and crash-landed at Neufchateau, with his BM, Ofw Josef Spretzer, wounded. On 15 June 1940, his aircraft was again damaged by Flak south of Sedan and his BM, Fw Robert Spies, was wounded. He then led his Staffel in the Battle of Britain and for much of the Blitz, achieving 50 day and night missions by 1941. On 30 November 1940, his Do 17 Z W.Nr. 1218 force-landed at Merville following an attack on Liverpool; again Ofw Robert Spies was injured. Czernik then led his Staffel in the Balkans and Greece with considerable success and again, his Do 17 Z was damaged by ground fire attacking Lamia/Larissa and the unfortunate Ofw Robert Spies was once more wounded. At the end of April 1941, his Gruppe returned to Achmer to convert to the Do 217 where he was awarded the RK. In July 1941, 6./KG 2 moved to Evreux with the Do 217 and the following month he was promoted to Hauptmann. On 21 October 1941, his Do 217 E-2 W.Nr. 1139, coded U5+AP, developed engine trouble returning from an attack on Liverpool. Fw Horst Walther (BM) managed to bail out but Czernik, Ofw Robert Spies (B) and Fw Karl Koch (BM) were killed when the Do 217 crashed at Slostermeerdijk on its final approach to Amsterdam-Schiphol airfield. He was promoted to Major posthumously and was buried at Ysselstein.

Name	Unit	Date	Fate
Oblt Paul Felder	**4 Nachtaufklärungsstaffel**	**29 Feb 44**	**Survived war**

Served initially with 1.(F)/121 and was awarded the Ehrenpokal in February 1942 and the Deutsches Kreuz in Gold in June 1942. In July 1943, he was with Erg.Nachtaufklärungsstaffel. He was awarded the RK in early 1944 for his time with 1.(F)/121 but by that time he was with 4 Nachtaufklärungsstaffel which he then commanded. Promoted to Hauptmann in June 1944, it has been stated that he deserted in March 1945.

Ofw Hans Frach	**4./KG 40**	**29 Oct 44**	**Survived war**

He joined 3./Küstenfliegergruppe 506 as an Unteroffizier in January 1940 where he would fly the He 115. In February 1941, he joined II./KG 40 and began converting to the Do 217. In January 1943, he became an instructor with 10./KG 2 but at the end of the year began converting to the Me 410, joining 16./KG 2 (soon to be 6./KG 51) in February 1944. He remained with this unit, carrying out intruder missions over Britain until August 1944 when the Gruppe returned to Germany to convert to the Me 262. Frach then flew 30 missions with 4 and 5./KG(J) 51 and would survive the war.

Ofw Heinz Graeber	**5./KG 40**	**30 Sep 43**	**Survived war**

He joined II./KG 40 in spring 1941 flying initially with 4. and then 5./KG 40, most flights with Oblt Wilhelm Schmitter as his pilot. In June 1943, II./KG 40 converted to the Me 410 and he flew with Hptm Schmitter in 15./KG 2. Sent out to attack airfields near Cambridge on the night of 24 August 1943, Schmitter and Graeber in Me 410A-1, W.Nr. 420214, U5+CF, were shot down off the Belgian coast by a Mosquito of 29 Sqn probably flown by Sqn Ldr Paul Arbon and Fg Off Alfred Ashcroft. They crashed in the sea off Dunkirk and both crew managed to get into a dinghy and several hours later were rescued. Graeber had been seriously wounded while Schmitter was unwounded. Graeber would not fly operationally again.

Graeber (far right).

Name	Unit	Date	Fate
Hptm Wolfgang Hankamer	**5./KG 2**	**29 Oct 43**	**†14 Jan 45**

Hankamer joined 9./KG 2 in April 1941 and after seeing action in the Balkans and the Soviet Union, began converting to the Do 217 in November 1941. He then joined 5./KG 2 and flew operationally until February 1943 when he became an instructor on 11./KG 2. On 11 March 1943 he was injured at Coulommiers when the vehicle in which he was sitting was hit by a landing Do 217. He did not return to 6./KG 2 until September 1943 and took command of the Staffel the following month, which was in the process of converting to the Ju 188. He would take command of 11./KG 2 in June 1944 and following the disbandment of KG 2, ended up as Staffelkapitän of 1./JG 301. He was killed in action 14 January 1945 flying a Fw 190 A-9 W.Nr. 206198 which crashed near Kyritz.

Hptm Kurt Heintz **Stab II./KG 40** **17 Oct 42** **†22 Jan 44**

At the start of the war, Heintz was flying with III./LG 1 and when he took command of 9./LG 1 in August 1941, he had flown in the Battle of France, Battle of Britain, Blitz, Mediterranean and Africa. In April 1942, he was flying over the Eastern Front and when in September 1942, III./LG 1 became III./KG 6, he flew against Britain from November 1942. Shortly after his award of the RK, he became the TO of II./KG 40 but before he converted to the Me 410 in June 1943, was posted to III./KG 101 as an instructor. However, when the Gruppenkommandeur of V./KG 2, Maj Wolf-Dietrich Meister, took command of KG 51, on 11 October 1943 Heintz was appointed to lead the Gruppe. At 0515 hrs on 22 January 1944, Heintz and Stfw Otto Runge, who had flown with Heintz on 9./LG 1, were killed when their Me 410 A-1 W.Nr. 0313 U5+WJ crashed on the Lydd Ranges in Kent. It was thought they had been shot down by a nightfighter, but no claims were filed for the time they crashed.

Obstlt Bernhard Jope **Stab./KG 100** **30 Dec 40 EL 24 Mar 44** **Survived war**

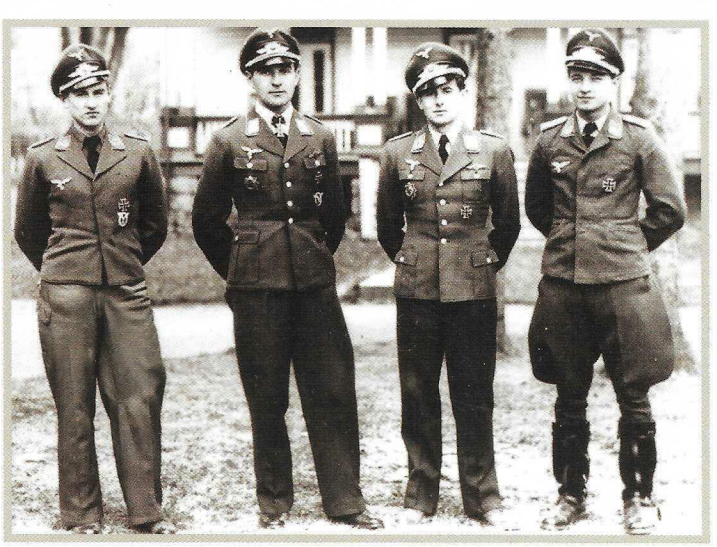
In May 1939, Jope was posted to KG 76 as the TO and an instructor and flew operationally in Poland after which he was posted to KG 28, this time as the Geschwader TO. However, his time with KG 28 was short as in the summer of 1940, he was posted to the newly formed I./KG 40, joining as a pilot with 2 Staffel and acting as the Gruppe TO. He was awarded the EK I in September 1940 and on 26 October 1940 he was credited with damaging the 42,500 GRT liner *Empress of Britain* which was subsequently sunk by a U-boat. For his achievements he was awarded the RK. He continued to fly missions well into the summer of 1942 but after the second of his two brothers was killed in action, he was posted to Rechlin for service trials on the He 177. His rest from operations was not long as in May 1943, he took command of IV./KG 100 in preparation for Do 217 glide-bomb anti-shipping missions. At the end of July 1943, he took command of III./KG 100 and operating from southern France, carried out glide-bomb missions over the Mediterranean with great success. In September 1943, he was given command of KG 100, a position he held until August 1944 during which time he was awarded the EL and promoted to Major. From then on, he commanded KG 30 for a short time and at the end of the war, he was serving as a staff officer.

Obstlt Karl Kessel **Stab./KG 2** **23 Jan 44** **Survived war**

At the start of the war he was flying with 3./KG 2, taking command of 1./KG 2 in January 1940. In September 1940 he took command of the newly formed 10./KG 2 to train replacement crews. In July 1941 he became KG 2's Geschwader Ia and in June 1942, took command of I./KG 2. Promoted this time to Major, he took command of KG 2 in May 1943 following the death of Obstlt Walter Bradel. Kessel would be promoted to Obstlt in November 1943 but would be taken off operations in February 1944 after which a series of training or staff appointments followed.

Hptm Alfred Kindler **6./KG 2** **24 Sep 42** **POW 30 Jul 42**

At the outbreak of war Kindler was flying with 6./KG 2 and saw combat in Poland. Over France, on 14 May 1940, his Do 17 was damaged in combat and he crash-landed in German territory. On the night of 29 August 1940, his aircraft was again damaged in combat and he and all but one of his crew bailed out over France; his BM was found dead in the wreckage and the BF landed in a river and drowned while Kindler received light wounds. Kindler then flew in the Balkans after which he began converting to the Do 217, resuming operations with the new aircraft in July 1941. In October 1941, he took command of 5./KG 2 from Hptm Ulrich Linnemann who had been wounded on 6 October 1941. However, following the death of Hptm Gerhard Czernik on 20 October 1941, he returned to command 6./KG 2. He remained in command until 31 July 1942 when during an attack on Birmingham, his Do 217 E-4 W.Nr. 5482, U5+FP, was damaged by Flak. On the return flight, the crew, which included Stfw Herbert Schirmer (B), Ofw Willi Kostka (BF) and Ofw Aloios Horch (BM), bailed out. The bomber crashed at Cheveley, near Newmarket, in Cambridgeshire and the entire crew was captured. All of the crew had the Frontflugspange in Gold for over 110 operational flights, Kindler being credited with around 230. Kindler had his DKiG when captured; Schirmer received his in June 1942 and Kostka and Horch would receive theirs in December 1942.



Kindler (2nd left) with Lt. Hartmut Holzapfel (6./KG 2, POW 15 March 1943); Oblt. Hans-Walter Wolff (6./KG 2, POW 22 August 1942); Lt. Karl-Ulrich Hertam (6./KG 2, POW 15 April 1943).

Name	Unit	Date	Fate
Hptm Alois Magg	**9./KG 2**	**5 Sep 44**	**Survived war**

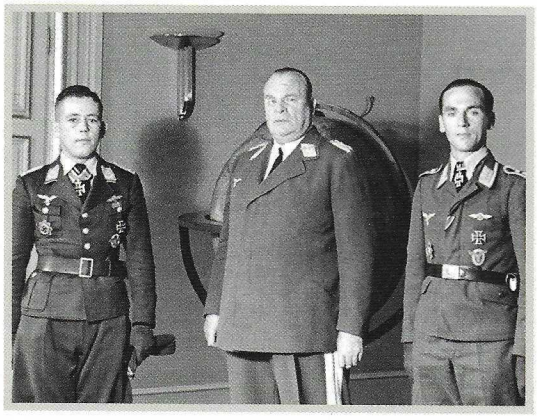
Magg was on 2./KG 2 at the outbreak of war and was in almost constant action until 8 September 1941 when he was lightly wounded over the Soviet Union. He then converted from the Do 17 to the Do 217 and resumed operations against Britain in 1942. He then become TO for II./KG 2 in June 1942 before taking command of 9./KG 2 in November 1943. He was still flying operationally when KG 2 returned to Germany and he ended the war commanding 15./NJG 2.

Oblt Heinrich Meyer	**2./KG 2**	**15 Oct 42**	**Survived war**

Was a Beobachter with 2./KG 2 at the outbreak of war and flew operationally with the Do 17 continuously until October 1941 when he began converting to the Do 217. He then continued operations with the Do 217 until the autumn of 1942 when he became the NO of I./KG 2. In Spring 1943 he began training as a pilot and joined IV./KG 76 in June 1944, ending the war as Ia for II./KG 76. He flew in the region of 280 combat missions.

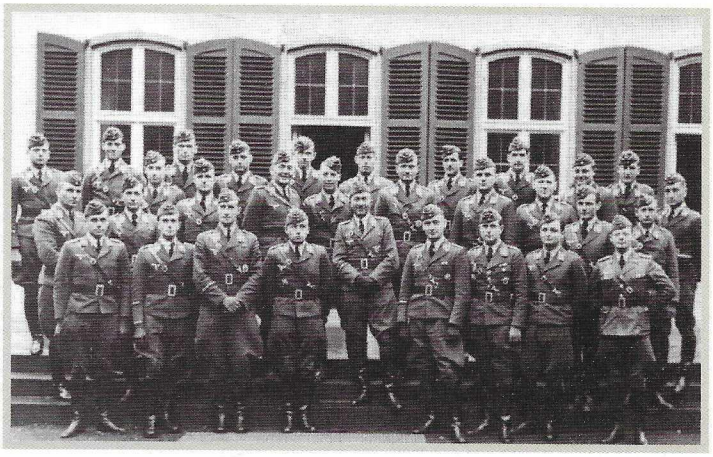
Ofw Karl Müller	**1./KG 2**	**15 Oct 42**	**†3 Feb 43**

He was on 1./KG 2 at the outbreak of war and flew almost continuous operations with the Do 17 until November 1941 when he started converting to the Do 217. He resumed operations in April 1942 and shortly after the Dieppe raid on 19 August 1942, became an instructor with 12./KG 2. However, after an apparent difference of opinion, with his Gruppenkommandeur, he returned to 3./KG 2 early in 1943. On 3 February 1943, his Do 217 E-4 W.Nr. 5462 U5+GL was shot down by Flt Lt John Willson and Fg Off Douglas Bunch of 219 Sqn. Although the Do 217 crashed on land near Muston in Yorkshire and the crew bailed out, no trace of Müller, Fw Heinz Lehwald (B), Uffz Friedrich Fruth (BF) and Uffz Heinrich Wilmsen (BM) were found and they still remain missing.



Above: Müller (via Oliver). Right: Meyer, Sperrle, Müller (via Oliver).

Name	Unit	Date	Fate
Hptm Heinrich Schmetz	**9./KG 100**	**29 Oct 44**	**Survived war**



Schmetz (2nd row, far right with officers of I./KG 4, Gotha, August 1939).

A member of I./KG 4 as a Beobachter prior to the outbreak of war, Schmetz transferred to 7./KG 4 and flew over Poland, Norway and France, his Ju 88 being shot down and crash-landing behind German lines on 31 May 1940. In October 1940, III./KG 4 became III./KG 30 after which he flew a number of missions with his Staffelkapitän Hptm Hajo Hermann. He then flew in the Mediterranean and in autumn 1941, III./KG 30 returned to France to recommence attacks on Britain. In January 1942, he began pilot training and in February 1943 joined KGrvbV 21 at Schwäbisch Hall where he was involved with the development of the Do 217 K and Fritz X for anti-shipping operations. In April 1943, this unit became III./KG 100 and Schmetz commanded 9 Staffel. Schmetz would be involved in the sinking of the battleship *Roma* and he and his crew, Uffz Oskar Huhn (BO), Fw Karl Schramm (BF) and Uffz Walter Wittek (BM) were credited with damaging HMS *Warspite* on 16 September 1943. In July 1944, he took command of III./KG 100 and was actively involved in covering the retreat to Germany. In September 1944, he began a series of training and staff appointments until the end of the war, albeit he took temporary command of II./KG 100 from November 1944 to February 1945.

FhJ Ofw Klaus Schmidtberg	**1 Nachtaufklärungsstaffel**	**6 Oct 44**	**Survived war**

Awarded Ehrenpokal in December 1942 and the Deutsches Kreuz in Gold 19 May 1943 while with 1 Nachtaufklärungsstaffel. He would be with the same unit when awarded the RK in October 1944.

Oblt Wilhelm Schmitter	**4./KG 40**	**14 Sep 42** **EL 24 Mar 44**	**†8 Nov 43**

A very experienced aviator, at the start of the war he was an Unteroffizier on 1./Küstenfliegergruppe 906. He moved to I./KG 40 in February 1941 but shortly after was transferred to 4./KG 40 flying the He 111, his first operational flight being on 3 May 1941. In July 1941 he began converting to the Do 217 and now a Leutnant, he flew his first and last mission of 1941 on 7 September as he was injured in a car accident on 25 September 1941. He rejoined 4./KG 40 in January 1942 and from 14 February 1942 restarted operational flying, carrying out a number of special missions against land targets, most of the time being part of Stab II./KG 40. He would receive the Ehrenpokal in January 1942, the Deutsches Kreuz in Gold in May 1942 and the RK in September 1942, the RK following one unsuccessful and two successful lone daylight attacks on Leamington Spa. He was promoted to Hauptmann in March 1943 and was given command of 5./KG 40 which, in June, after converting to the Me 410, became 15./KG 2. Between 7 September 1941 and 18 May 1943, he flew 60 operational flights with the Do 217. During an attack on airfields near Cambridge on the night of 24 August 1943, Schmitter and his Bordfunker Ofw Heinz Graeber in Me 410 A-1, W.Nr. 420214, U5+CF, were shot down off the Belgian coast by a Mosquito of 29 Sqn probably flown by Sqn Ldr Paul Arbon and Fg Off Alfred Ashcroft. They crashed in the sea off Dunkirk and

Schmitter (via Green).

both crew managed to get into a dinghy. They were rescued several hours later. Schmitter was unhurt but Graeber was seriously wounded and never flew again operationally. Schmitter flew his next mission with the Me 410 on 24 September 1943 with new Bordfunker Uffz Felix Hainzinger. He would fly another five missions taking his total of operational flights to 193 but at 2243 hrs on 8 November 1943, his Me 410 A-1, 10244, U5+BF, was shot down by Sqn Ldr Bill Maguire and Fg Off Bill Jones crashing and exploding at Hampden Park, Eastbourne, killing both crew. They would both be awarded the Eichenlaub and Schmitter was promoted to Major posthumously.

Oblt Fritz Sengschmitt **I./KG 2** **24 Sep 42** **†11 Jan 44**

Schmitter & Sengschmitt (via Green).

He joined 2./KG 2 in Autumn 1940 and then flew in the Blitz, Balkans, Mediterranean and Soviet Union before returning to Germany to convert to the Do 217. By the time of his award of the RK, he had flown 186 operational flights. In late 1942, he took command of 4./KG 40 and in June 1943, he converted to the Me 410, then commanded 14./KG 2. In August 1943, he was posted to command 2./ZG 26. On 11 January 1944, his Bf 110 G-2 W.Nr. 120074, 3U+Black 8, was shot down by American fighters near Elbingerode killing him and his Bordfunker, Deutsches Kreuz in Gold-winner Fw Wilhelm Kerps formerly of 5./KG 40.

Hptm Kurt Seyfarth **Stab./KG 2** **5 Sep 44** **Survived war**

An experienced reconnaissance pilot, at the start of the war he was an instructor, but then flew with a series of transport units. He joined 12./KG 2 in March 1943 and began converting to the Do 217. He then took command of Stabstaffel/KG 2 in June 1943 after which he undertook a number of important attacks including against the Hoffmann Ball Bearing factory at Chelmsford. When the Stabsstaffel was disbanded in July 1944 he remained with KG 2, converting to the Ju 188 but when KG 2 was disbanded, he began, but did not complete, conversion training to the Me 262.

Name	Unit	Date	Fate
Fw Günther Stein	**6./KG 2**	**26 Mar 44**	**POW 15 Mar 43**

A Bordfunker, Stein joined 5./KG 2 in October 1939, but moved to 6./KG 2 in February 1940, usually being in the crew of Oblt Friedrich-Wilhelm Dörflinger. He was wounded in the foot on 10 May 1940, but by the end of the Battle of France had flown 22 missions. After the battle of Britain, Blitz and Balkans, in April 1941, he began converting to the Do 217. Returning to operations, he was taken ill in mid-1942 and while recuperating, on 30 July 1942, Oblt Dörflinger was shot down and Stein's replacement, Uffz Erich Ohnesorge, killed. When he recovered, he flew with Oblt Hartmut Holzapfel, but during an attack on Grimsby on the night of 15 March 1943, Holzapfel and Stein together with Ofw August Küpper (B) and Fw Gerhard Dörr (BM) were shot down in a Do 217 E-4, W.Nr. 5590, U5+LP, by Flt Lt John Willson and Plt Off George Holloway of 219 Sqn. The bomber crashed between Grainsby Halt and North Thoresby, Lincolnshire at 2130 hrs and all four crew were captured, albeit Stein was slightly injured. He would be awarded the RK and promoted to Oberfeldwebel in 1944.

Hptm Josef Steudel **8./KG 2** **29 Oct 44** **Survived war**

He joined 8./KG 2 in July 1940 and flew in the Battle of Britain, the Blitz, Balkans, Mediterranean and Soviet Union before converting to the Do 217, returning to operations in January 1942. He suffered a broken leg in a landing accident due to engine failure on 8 November 1942. In July 1943 he was given command of 8./KG 2 and a year later, was posted to be an instructor with 12./KG 2 where he was awarded the RK for completing 165 missions. By the end of the war, he had almost finished converting to the Ar 234 with KG 76 but never flew operationally again after leaving 8./KG 2.

Fw Johann Trenke **7./KG 2** **5 Sep 44** **Survived war**

He joined 7./KG 2 in February 1943 but moved to 5./KG 2 which, in June 1943, became 16./KG 2 flying the Me 410. In February 1944, his Staffel became 6./KG 51 but in mid-August II./KG 51 returned to Germany to convert to the Me 262. He eventually went operational with the jet in December 1944 and when II./KG 51 was disbanded, he joined JV 44. His award of the RK was for his success with the Me 410 and shooting down nine aircraft.

Trenke & Frach.

Hptm Erich Wiese **1 Nachtaufklärungsstaffel** **26 Mar 44** **†31 Dec 43**

A Beobachter, he was awarded the Ehrenpokal in July 1942 and the Deutsches Kreuz in Gold in January 1943 by which time he was with 1 Nachtaufklärungsstaffel. He would be promoted to Hauptmann in March 1943 but on 31 December 1943, his He 111 H-16 W.Nr. 161998, K7+OH, crashed on take-off at Golta in the Ukraine killing him, Fw Bruno von Sawilski (F), Ofw Siegfried Reimann (BF) and Uffz Jakob Jochemich (BM). They were all buried at Perwomajsk. Wiese would be awarded the RK posthumously.

APPENDIX FIVE

Aircrew known to have been awarded the Deutsches Kreuz in Gold while flying the Do 217

KG 2

Stab./KG 2

Obstlt Hans von Koppelow (F)	19 Feb 43		
Hptm Gottfried Buchholz (F)	24 May 42		
Fw Heinz-Wulf Krabbenhöft (F)	21 Aug 42	+4./KG 40 22 Dec 42 (also 8./KG 2)	
Hptm Kurt Seyfarth (F)		16 Jan 44	

I./KG 2

Fw Wilhelm Slaby (BF)	Stab I./KG 2	28 Jan 44	Also 1./KG 2
Ofw Heinz Gilliam (BF)	I./KG 2	1 Nov 43	
Maj Karl Kessel (F)	I./KG 2	29 Mar 43	
Fw Helmut Zey (BM)	I./KG 2	28 Jan 44	
Ofw Gustav Helmecke (F)	1./KG 2	23 Nov 42	+23 Aug 42
Ofw Felix Hipp (BM)	1./KG 2	7 Feb 42	
Uffz Werner Kahnt (BF)	1./KG 2	16 Feb 43	W.6./KG 51 3 Aug 44
Ofw Georg Kröhl (F)	1./KG 2	19 Jan 42	+2 Aug 42
Lt Ludwig Miller (B)	1./KG 2	2 Jul 42	
Ofw Karl Müller (F)	1./KG 2	17 Jun 42	+3./KG 2 3 Feb 43
Oblt Hans Peters (F)	1./KG 2	1Jan 45	+28 Jul 44
Ofw Hans Purrucker (B)	1./KG 2	28 Jan 44	
Ofw Hellmuth Richter (B)	1./KG 2	17 Jun 42	+3 Mar 43
Oblt Joachim Rücker (F)	1./KG 2	19 Jan 42	
Fw Helmut Selbach (B)	1./KG 2	16 Oct 43	+12 Jun 43
Ofw Heinz Wolpers (F)	1./KG 2	19 Jan 42	+22 Jul 42
Lt Alois Magg (F)	2./KG 2	19 Jan 42	
Oblt Fritz Sengschmidt (F)	2./KG 2	21 Aug 42	+2./ZG 26 11 Jan 44
Lt Gerhard Bartels (F)	3./KG 2	7 Sep 42	
Ofw Peter Broich (F)	3./KG 2	19 Jan 42	
Fw Herbert Glatzel (B)	3./KG 2	15 Mar 43	
Fw Helmut Heimann (BF)	3./KG 2	24 Sep 42	Also 12./KG 2
Ofw Hans Ruttkowski (BM)	3./KG 2	19 Jan 42	+29 Jul 44
Ofw Martin Ketelhut (BM)	3./KG 2	15 Mar 43	

II./KG 2

Hptm Heinz Engel (B)	II./KG 2	17 Oct 43	W. 22 Feb 44
Hptm Berthold Krüger (B)	II./KG 2	12 Jul 42	Also 4./KG 2
Oblt Werner Borner (BF)	4./KG 2	19 Oct 42	
Hptm Walter Bornschein (B)	4./KG 2	16 Feb 42	+ Führer Kurier Staffel 27 Apr 44
Lt Johannes Bredtmeyer (B)	4./KG 2	27 Apr 42	+7 Jul 42
Ofw Kurt Dehmel (B)	4./KG 2	23 Aug 43	
Ofw Hans Haase (BM)	4./KG 2	24 Sep 42	
Fw Alfred Letzel (B)	4./KG 2	1 Aug 43	W.5 Jun 42
Ofw Friedrich Lohrer (BM)	4./KG 2	5 Jul 43	
Ofw Otto Moese (F)	4./KG 2	3 Dec 42	
Lt Karl Schiweck (F)	4./KG 2	12 Jul 43	W.27 Oct 41
Uffz Heinz-Josef Schmitz (BS)	4./KG 2	3 Dec 42	+ Führer Kurier Staffel 27 Apr 1944

Oblt Helmut Voigt (B)	4./KG 2	27 Jul 42	+30 May 42
Lt Dietrich Zihmann (F)	4./KG 2	3 Oct 42	
Oblt Gerhard Blaschke (F)	5./KG 2	6 Dec 43	Also III./KG 2
Ofw Georg Brendebach (F)	5./KG 2	2 Nov 42	
Fw Paul Brömmelmeier (B)	5./KG 2	24 Jul 44	
Fw Gustav Delp (BF)	5./KG 2	20 Mar 44	W.21 Jun 42; +Stab II./KG 51 27 Apr 44
Fw Kurt Dölle (F)	5./KG 2	29 Jun 42	+4./KG 2 30 May 42
Oblt Wolfgang Hankamer (F)	5./KG 2	17 Aug 42	+1./JG 301 14 Jan 45
Oblt Albert Hein (B)	5./KG 2	2 Nov 42	+19 Apr 44
Ofw Lothar Küll (BF)	5./KG 2	3 Dec 42	+16./KG 2 3 Sep 43
Fw Walter Lotz (BF)	5./KG 2	3 Dec 42	
Oblt Karl-Günther Näder (F)	5./KG 2	2 Dec 42	+16./KG 2 3 Sep 43
Ofw Johann Rulfs (F)	5./KG 2	19 Mar 42	+21 Jun 42
Fw Max Schedel (B)	5./KG 2	3 Dec 42	W.11./KG 2 12 Feb 43
Hptm Hermann Schröter (F)	5./KG 2	17 Oct 43	W.6./KG 40 12 Apr 42
Fw Theodor Schulz (BF)	5./KG 2	9 Jun 42	+21 Jun 42
Fw Hans-Joachim Urner (B)	5./KG 2	3 Dec 42	W.4./KG 2 19 Aug 42
Ofw Wilhelm Winkler (F)	5./KG 2	25 Feb 42	+30 May 42
Ofw Helmut Böttcher (B)	6./KG 2	12 Jul 43	
Oblt Friedrich-Wilhelm Dörflinger (F)	6./KG 2	29 May 42	+30 Jul 42
Ofw Alois Horch (BM)	6./KG 2	23 Dec 42	POW 31 Jul 42
Oblt Alfred Kindler (F)	6./KG 2	7 Feb 42	POW 31 Jul 42
Ofw Walter Klein (F)	6./KG 2	27 Jul 42	+19 Aug 42
Ofw Willi Kostka (BF)	6./KG 2	3 Dec 43	POW 31 Jul 42
Ofw Hugo Lemser (B)	6./KG 2	3 Dec 42	W.19 Aug 42
Oblt Heinz-Emil Middermann (F)	6./KG 2	16 Aug 43	+II./KG 100 16 Feb 44
Stfw Herbert Schirmer (B)	6./KG 2	17 Jun 42	POW 31 Jul 42
Fw Günther Stein (BF)	6./KG 2	2 Dec 42	POW 15 Mar 43
Oblt Hans Wolff (F)	6./KG 2	3 Dec 42	POW 23 Aug 42

III./KG 2

Hptm Albert Schreiweis (F)	III./KG 2	16 Jan 44	W.9./KG 2 3 Sep 43
Oblt Ernst Andres (F)	8./KG 2	21 Dec 42	+5./NJG 4 11 Feb 45
Ofw Wilhelm Haase (F)	8./KG 2	20 Mar 44	W.9 Mar 43; with 16./KG 2
Ofw Gerhard Heinze (B)	8./KG 2	20 Mar 44	Also Stab III./KG 2
Ofw Heinz Schreiber (B)	8./KG 2	20 Mar 44	
Oblt Josef Steudel (F)	8./KG 2	21 Aug 42	
Ofw Gotthard Wachtel (BF)	8./KG 2	20 Mar 44	Also Stab III./KG 2
Oblt Otto Waldmann (B)	8./KG 2	7 Nov 42	+18 Jul 42
Ofw Wilhelm Diller (BF)	9./KG 2	20 Jul 42	W.11 Nov 41
Ofw Fritz Wagner (BM)	9./KG 2	20 Mar 44	

IV./KG 2

Hptm Wolf-Dietrich Riediger (B)	10./KG 2	15 Jan 43	
Ofw Wilhelm Stüwe (B)	10./KG 2	28 Jan 43	W.1/KG 2 28 Jul 44
Fw Friedrich Bergau (BM)	11./KG 2	29 May 43	W.11 Mar 43. Also 5./KG 2
Ofw Karl Engstler (F)	11./KG 2	20 Mar 44	Also 8./KG 2, I./KG 2
Oblt Otto Linnemann (F)	11./KG 2	12 Jan 43	Also 1./KG 2
Ofw Friedrich Rath (BM)	11./KG 2	17 Oct 43	

Stfw Wilhelm Steurer (B)	11./KG 2	20 Mar 44	+ Führer Kurier Staffel 27 Apr 44
Uffz Wilhelm Tebbe (BF)	11./KG 2	12 Apr 43	Also 5./KG 2
Hptm Leo Hofer (B)	12./KG 2	15 Mar 43	
Hptm Karl-Heinz Krempel (B)	12./KG 2	20 Mar 44	

II./KG 40

Hptm Wendt Freiherr von Schlippenbach (F)	Gr Kdr	18 May 42	+ 8 Apr 42
Ofw Heinz Gräber (BF)	Stab II	21 Aug 42	W.25 Aug 43 with 15./KG 2
Hptm Friedrich-Wilhelm Methner (F)	Stab II	5 Nov 42	+16 Jul 43 with V./KG 2
Oblt Willhem Schmitter (F)	Stab II	18 May 42	+8 Nov 43 with 15./KG 2
Ofw Hans Frach (F)	4./KG 40	27 Oct 42	
Ofw Philipp Kraushaar (F)	4./KG 40	27 Oct 42	+10 Aug 42
Ofw Franz Eyrich (BF)	5./KG 40	14 Dec 42	
Ofw Bruno Harms (BF)	5./KG 40	14 Dec 42	+ 2 Aug 44 with 3./LG 1
Fw Wilhelm Kerps (BF)	5./KG 40	14 Dec 42	+11 Jan 44 with 2./ZG 26
Lt Rudolf Abrahamczik (F)	6./KG 40	12 Jan 43	

II & III./KG 100

Uffz Harry Wulf (B)	4./KG 100	25 Nov 43	
Hptm Wolfgang Vorpahl (F)	5./KG 100	26 Nov 43	
Fw Konrad Doser (F)	5./KG 100	28 Jan 44	+3 Aug 44
Oblt Ignaz Sandner (B)	5./KG 100	28 Jan 44	+ 3 Aug 44
Oblt Wolfgang Böttger (B)	6./KG 100	25 Nov 43	+4 Oct 43
Hptm Willi Scholl (F)	6./KG 100	1 Oct 44	+20 Apr 44
Ofw Erich Scheinert (BM)	III./KG 100	29 Mar 44	

Erprobungs und Lehrkommando 21 (III./KG 100)

Hptm Ernst Hetzel (F)		24 Sep 42

1 Nachtaufklärungsstaffel

(from January 1943 flew a mix of He 111 H-6 and H-16, Do 217 E-4, K-1, M-1)

Fw Heinz Bennewitz (BF)	26 Nov 43	
Hptm Karl Biederstaedt (B)	20 Mar 44	
Ofw Werner Conrad (B)	26 Nov 43	
Lt Fritz Edelhoff (B)	17 Oct 43	
Oblt Erwin Kratzsch (F)	26 Nov 43	
Uffz Heinrich Niederbacher (B)	12 Apr 43	+8Jan 44
Lt Albert Pape (BF)	28 Apr 43	+1./FAGr 5 16 Feb 44
Lt Albert Pesch (BF)	12 Apr 43	
Ofw Siegfried Reimann (BF)	17 Oct 43	+31 Dec 43
Fw Klaus Schmidtberg (F)	19 May 43	
Ofw Willy Selbach(B)	17 Oct 43	
Oblt Max Temmert (B)	19 May 43	M. Jan 44
Oblt Erich Wiese (B)	10 Nov 42	+31 Dec 43
Lt Alfred Willems (F)	12 Apr 43	W.8 Feb 43
Oblt Willi Wilzopolski (F)	18 May 43	+1./NSGr 9 3 Mar 45

2 Nachtaufklärungsstaffel

(from January 1943 flew a mix of He 111 H-6, H-16, Do 217 E-4, K-1, M-1, Do 215 B-4 and Do 17 Z)

Ofw Friedrich Bendix (B)	26 Nov 43	
Ofw Heinz Cordes (B)	4 Jun 43	M. 5 Mar 43

Fw Gerhard Dressler (F)		
Ofw Helmuth Dully (BF)	12 Dec 43	
Fw Gerhard Kluge (BF)	17 Oct 43	
Oblt Fritz Kuschke (B)	1 Apr 45	W.7 Aug 43
Oblt Heinz Laubisch (F)	25 Mar 43	+29 Jan 43
Oblt Karlheinz Licht (B)	16 Aug 43	
Lt Hartmut Meier (F)	17 Oct 43	+7./NJG 2 1 Jan 45
Uffz Alfred Muhr (BF)	31 Aug 43	+29 Jan 43
Lt Siegfried Otto (B)	17 Oct 43	
Oblt Paul Palmer (B)	12 Jul 43	W.27 May 43
Hptm Hans-Eberhard Scholvin (B)	25 Mar 43	+29 Jan 43
Lt Günter Schröder	25 Mar 43	
Ofw Gustav Stauss (B)		
Lt Günter Vermehren (F)	25 Mar 43	

3 Nachtaufklärungsstaffel

(from January 1943 flew a mix of Do 17 P, Do 217 E-4, K-1)

Lt Fritz Dittrich (B)	31 Aug 43	+10 Sep 43
Oblt Rolf Eckert (B)	23 Jul 43	
Oblt Heinz Fissel (F)	31 Mar 43	
Hptm Richard Glitz (F)	16 Jan 44	
Oblt Heinrich Herpich (B)	25 Mar 43	
Fw Werner Nierling (BF)	29 Apr 43	
Oblt Ulrich Remmler (F)	25 Mar 43	+9 Feb 43
Oblt Franz Rödel (B)	12 Jul 43	
Ofw Wolfgang Stadermann (F)	16 Apr 44	
Oblt Heinz Zembsch (B)	16 Apr 43	+9 Feb 43

4 Nachtaufklärungsstaffel

(from January 1943 flew a mix of He 111 H-5, H-16, Do 17 P and M, Do 217 E-4, K-1, M-1)

Ofw Siegfried Diercks (F)	29 Apr 43	+21 Apr 43
Uffz Walter Erkner (BS)	28 Jan 44	
Oblt Erich Grabke (B)	23 Dec 42	+30 Jan 43
Ofw Hermann Kuhn (F)	27 Sep 43	
Fw Alfons Weisser (BF)	2 Aug 43	+21 Apr 43

(All but Lt Günter Schröder had previously received the Ehrenpokal)

Unknown Nachtaufklärungsstaffel

FhjFw Werner Kurth (F)

Oblt Heinrich Thielen (F)

APPENDIX SIX

Luftwaffe Order of Battle for 'Baedeker Blitz' 23 April to 6 May 1942

Unit	Commander	Base
Stab./KG 2	Obstlt Dr Georg Pasewaldt Obstlt Hans von Koppelow	Soesterberg (from 1 May 42)
I./KG 2	Hptm Otto Kettler	Villaroche/Gilze Rijen
II./KG 2	Hptm Walter Bradel	Soesterberg/Evreux/ Eindhoven
III./KG 2	Obstlt Hans von Koppelow Maj Kurt Leythauser	Schiphol/Caen (from 30 Apr 42)
IV./KG 2	Hptm Martin Kästner	Evreux/Gilze Rijen
IV./KG 3	Maj Erich Rathmann	Evere
IV./KG 4	Hptm Gerd Roth	Avord
IV./KG 30	Hptm Martin Schumann	Bretigny
II./KG 40	Hptm Waldemar Höner zu Drewer	Soesterberg/Chartres
IV./KG 55	Obstlt Hans-Carl von Linsingen	Dijon
Stab./KG 77	Obstlt Hermann Schlüter	Rennes (30 Apr 42)
II./KG 77	Hptm Heinrich Paepcke	Rennes (1 May 42)
IV./KG 77	Hptm Hans-Jörg Leuze	Bourges/Bretigny
Erprobungs und Lehr Kdo./KG 100	Hptm Siegfried Langer	Chartres
Kü.Fl.Gr 106	Maj Gerhard von Roth	Leeuwarden
Kü.Fl.Gr 506	Hptm Ernst-Heinrich Thomsen	Leeuwarden/Dinard

APPENDIX SEVEN

Luftwaffe bomber losses 23 April-5 May 1942 during Baedeker Blitz attacks

23 April 1942	5./KG 2	Do 217E-2, 5356, U5+MN	Shute, Dorset 2335 hrs	Oblt Dr Kurt Gumbart-F-POW Uffz Lothar Zimmerhackl-B-POW, Fw Willi Zastrau-BF-POW Uffz Lothar Barthel-BM-POW	Exeter. Shot down by Plt Off J D A Tharp of 604 Sqn west of Seaton 2328 hrs
25 April 1942	12./KG 3	Ju 88A-6, 3459, 5K+DW	Gwaunceste Hill, Builth Wells, 2350 hrs	Oblt Günther Brixius-F-+ Ofw Walter Kreisenbrock-B-POW Gefr Paul Kochon-BF-POW Fw Adolf Liedig-BM-+	Bath. Shot down by Fg Off H G S Wyrill, 255 Sqn, Llandrindrod
25 April 1942	10./KG 2	Do 17Z-1, 2507, U5+GW	40 miles south of Worthing, 2345 hrs	Uffz Siegfried Kukla-F-+ Gefr Karl Küisters-B-+ Uffz Karl Graf-BF-+ Uffz Hans Jansen-BM-+	Bath. Shot down by Sqn Ldr J G Topham of 219 Sqn 2345 Bodies of Graf & Jansen recovered
25 April 1942	II./KG 40	Do 217E-3, 5090	Courseulles	-	Engine failed and crew bailed out
25 April 1942	1/506	Ju 88A-4, 1540, S4+MH		Uffz Michael Bartl-F-+ Lt Joachim Ritzmann-B-+ Uffz Fritz Schmidt-BF-+ Fw Max Burdenski-BM-+	Possibly shot down by Flt Lt M Neyder, 307 Sqn off Start Point, 2236 hrs

26/27 April 1942	10./KG 2	Do 17Z-3, 4236, U5+BW		Lt Helmut Schobbert-F-+ Gefr Kurt Lotz-B-+ Fw Heinrich Stadler-BF-+ Gefr Johann Plschek-BM-+	Bath
26 April 1942	4./KG 40	Do 217E-4, 1120, F8+EM	Handley Cross, Dorset, 0500 hrs	Fw Herbert Gergs-F-+ Ogefr Helmut Tomschi-B-+ Uffz Karl Hainzinger-BF-+ Uffz Adolf Lenz-BM-+	Bath
26/27 April 1942	IV./KG 4	He 111H-5, 3590	Avord	-	Bath. Crash-landed due to nightfighter attack; 20% damage. Claims by 125 and 604 Sqn
26/27 April 1942	IV./KG 55	He 111H-5, 5519	Bristol	Ofw Willi Schulze-BM-+	Bath. Claims by 125 and 604 Sqn
27 April 1942	106	Ju 88A-4, 1722	Brussels	-	Engine fire on operational sortie; crew bailed out
27 April 1942	106	Ju 88A-4, 1576	Livilliers	Fw Karl Syring-F-+ Gefr Gustav Fink-BS-+	Engine failure on operational sortie
28/29 April 1942	10./KG 4	He 111H-5, 4034, 5J+MU		Hptm Eberhard Hennings-F-St Kap-+ Stfw Paul Heinemann-B-+ Fw Helmut Bark-BF-+ Uffz Gerhard Palten-BM-+	York. Off Harwich. Possibly claimed by Sgt W Jenkinson, 68 Sqn, 0420 hrs
29 April 1942	1./106	Ju 88D-1, 1334, M2+CH	Crockey Hill, York, 0330 hrs	Lt Werner Boy-F-+ Uffz Karl Kugler-B-+ Uffz Willi Schindler-BF-+ Gefr Heinz Müller-BM-POW	York. Shot down by WO Y Mahe, 253 Sqn, York, 0330 hrs
29 April 1942	IV./KG 30	Ju 88A-5, 4030	Gilze-Rijen	-	25% damage
28/29 April 1942	11./KG 77	Ju 88A-5, 0289, 3Z+AV		Lt Armin Körfer-F-+ Uffz Heinrich Müller-B-+ Fw Fritz Ernst-BF-+ Ogefr Hermann Schleising-BM-+	York. Possibly shot down by Plt Off A G Lawrence of 406 Sqn 70-80 miles east of Whitby 0409 hrs
29 April 1942	6./KG 2	Do 217E-2, 1164, U5+KP	Coneysthorpe, Yorkshire, 0330 hrs	Lt Karl-Heinz Mühlen-F-POW Uffz Otto Hacker-B-POW Uffz Fritz Kälber-BF-+ Fw Oskar Fussnecker-BM-POW	York. Shot down by Fg Off D C Furse, 406 Sqn, east of Bridlington 0400 hrs
29 April 1942	Stab./KG 2	Do 217E-4, 1186, U5+AA	Soesterberg	Uffz Hermann Schiffer-BF-+ Uffz Alfred Kawulock-BM-+	Norwich. Possibly damaged by Wg Cdr P P Hanks of RAF Coltishall near Coltishall, 2340 hrs of various pilots from 610 Sqn
30 April/ 1 May 1942	Erpr-und-Lehr Kdo./ KG 100	He 111H-6, 4623, 6N+ER	Ostende	Fw Paul Nagel-BF-+	Sunderland. Enemy action. 30% damage. Claims by 29 & 68 Sqn
30 April/ 1 May 1942	10./KG 3	Ju 88A-5, 2154, 5K+AU		Hptm Eduard Kürzel-F-+ Fw Josef Sweerins-BM-+ Fw Rudolf Hess-B-+ Uffz Heinz Behres-BF-+	Sunderland. Claims by 406 Sqn
30 April/ 1 May 1942	11./KG 3	Ju 88A-5, 4277, 5K+BV		Oblt Hans Hübner-F-+ Fw Eberhard Schulz-B-+ Ofw Otto Kellmann-BF-+ Fw Josef Siewecke-BM-+	Sunderland. Claims by 406 Sqn
30 April/ 1 May 1942	10./KG 30	Ju 88A-5, 5129, 4D+TU		Lt Gerhard Stoll-F-+ Uffz Alois Irschina-B-+ Uffz Ernst Velten-BF-+ Uffz Artur Ahlers-BM-+	Sunderland. Claims by 406 Sqn

30/1 May 1942	11./KG 30	Ju 88A-5, 0200, 4D+FV		Ogefr Walter Best-F-+ Uffz Josef Berthold-B-+ Uffz Heinz Struwe-BF-+ Ogefr Josef Schmidt-BM-+	Sunderland. Claims by 406 Sqn
4 May 1942	12./KG 2	Do 17Z-1, 3306, U5+CW	Portland	Ofw Albert Heyer-F-+ Ofw Franz Warwas-B-+ Fw Helmut Fahle-BF-+ Ofw Heinrich Pillmann-BM-+	Exeter. Shot down by Flt Lt E D Crew of 604 Sqn off Portland 0140 hrs. Body of Warwas washed ashore
4 May 1942	III./KG 2	Do 217E-4, 1163	St Andre		Force-landed after enemy action. 15% damage. Possibly damaged by Sqn Ldr S H Skinner of 604 Sqn off Portland 0218 hrs
4 May 1942	11./KG 30	Ju 88A-5, 3389, 4D+EU	Off Portland	Lt Gerd Brandt-F-+ Uffz Herbert Meusel-B-+ Uffz Willi Brinkmann-BF-+ Gefr Paul Schröder-BM-+	Exeter. Possibly shot down by Flt Lt M Neyder of 307 Sqn 20 miles south of Seaton 0400 hrs or Fg Off S Andrzejewski of 307 Sqn 8 miles east of Torbay at 0146 hrs. Body of Meusel washed ashore
4 May 1942	11./KG 30	Ju 88A-5, 5169, 4D+FU	Topsham Barracks, Exeter, 0245 hrs	Uffz Bernhard Leyser-F-+ Gefr Ernst Keil-B-+ Gefr Adolf Koepl-BF-+ Uffz Wilhelm Pfeiff-BM-+	Exeter. Shot down by Sgt W Illaszewicz of 307 Sqn at Topsham 0142 hrs
4 May 1942	2./506	Ju 88D-1, 1154	Dinard	Lt Ernst Tramp-B-+ Uffz Josef Palmer-F-+ Uffz Richard Staub-BM-+ Uffz Karl Schorn-BF-injured	Probably shot down by Sqn Ldr J A F MacLachlan of 1 Sqn at Dinard 0400 hrs
4 May 1942	1./506	Ju 88A-4, 1528	Dinard	Fw Robert Beegel-F-+ Lt Roman Wallner-B-+ Ogefr Hans Biebel-BF-+	Probably shot down by Sqn Ldr J A F MacLachlan of 1 Sqn at Dinard 0400 hrs. Possibly crashed at Plouer sur Rance
4 May 1942	12./KG 77	Ju 88A-5, 0331, 3Z+HW	Colyton, Devon, 0225 hrs	Uffz Anton Kesselborn-F-+ Uffz Karl Reps-B-+ Uffz Ernst Hemman-BF-+ Uffz Josef Saes-BM-+	Exeter. Shot down by Sgt W Illaszewicz of 307 Sqn at Colyton 0225 hrs
4/5 May 1942	11./KG 77	Ju 88A-5, 4050, 3Z+EV		Uffz Ernst Hermann-F-+ Gefr Heinz Seifert-B-+ Uffz Karl-Heinz Krieg-BF-+ Ogefr Erich Hager-BM-+	Cowes
4/5 May 1942	9./KG 2	Do 217E-4, 1174, U5+AT	Off Isle of Wight	Fw Erich Sonnemann-F-+ Fw Hans Wimmer-B-+ Uffz Karl-Heinz Westmar-BF-+ Uffz Alfred Kanther-BM-+	Cowes. Shot down by Flt Lt E D Crew of 604 Sqn off Isle of Wight 0430 hrs

Aircraft destroyed	25
Aircrew killed	82
Aircrew POW	10
Do 217	5 destroyed, 2 damaged
Do 17	3 destroyed
He 111	1 destroyed, 3 damaged
Ju 88	16 destroyed, 1 damaged

APPENDIX EIGHT

Air combat victories by Hauptmann Hans Krause, I./NJG 3 and II./NJG 101 achieved while flying the Do 217

First flight in Do 217 30 Jun 42

First operational flight in Do 217 with 1./NJG 3 27 Aug 42

6 Oct 42	Wellington	2304 hrs	Rheine	BK313 115 Sqn (Fg Off L I Smith-+)	Target Osnabrück
	Wellington	2322 hrs	1 km N.Slagharen	DF639/75 Sqn (Sgt G W Rhodes-+)	Target Osnabrück. Crashed near Hardenberg
1 Feb 44	Wellington	2045 hrs	SE Maribor	LN345 104 Sqn (Flt Sgt S D Russell-+)	Target Maribor seen to crash 2040 hrs 2 km SE Maribor
3 Apr 44	Wellington	2346 hrs	Plattensee	LN858150 Sqn (Sgt G G Pemberton-+)	Target Budapest; crashed Keszthely, Lake Balaton
16 Apr 44	Wellington	2358 hrs	N.Breca	LN503 142 Sqn Flt Lt E W Wiseman-+)	Target Budapest; crashed near Osijek
				JA127 142 Sqn (Flt Sgt K J Turley-+)	Crashed Gyal
4-5 May 44	Wellington	2245-0206 hrs		JA512 104 Sqn (Fg Off R Avery-+)	Target Budapest. Crashed Torbagyi Street, Budapest (Also a claim by Uffz Herbert Nahlik, 1./NJG 6)
11 May 44	Lancaster	0033 hrs	E.Siegen	Liberator EW140 178 Sqn (Fg Off R S Anyon-+)	Target Budapest
30 May 44	Halifax	2240 hrs	30 km S.Subotica	JD172 148 Sqn (Flt Sgt T J Makepeace-+)	Target Prilep
10 Jun 44	Mitchell	2322 hrs	SW Budapest	41-13032 5 GvAD DD/14 GvAP (Capt E A Muhin-+)	Between Harkány and Siklós
3 Jul 44	Wellington	0025 hrs	S.Sombor	LP253 40 Sqn (Flt Sgt R D Sutcliffe-POW)	Target Prahova
				ME990 40 Sqn (Fg Off L F Tichbourne-POW)	Target Prahova; crashed near Macesu de Sus, Romania
3 Jul 44	Halifax	2226 hrs	Sombor	JP247 148 Sqn (Flt Lt G R Wood-+)	Crashed near Oberzirszallas
3 Jul 44	Halifax	2252 hrs	Sombor	JP179 148 Sqn (WO L J Blattman-POW)	Crashed near Sombor (Also a claim by Hptm Leopold Fellerer, III./NJG 6, 10 km NE Kapsovar, 0150 hrs 4 Jul 44)
22 Jul 44	Wellington	0006 hrs	Grussbach	LP204 150 Sqn (Sgt F E Palmer-+)	Target Pardubice; crashed near Němčičky
				JA521 37 Sqn (Fg Off F B Newmarch-+)	Crashed Stosikovice na Louce
				LN808 142 Sqn (Plt Off E Galloway-+)	Crashed near St Polten (Also claims by Lt Peter Spoden, III./NJG 6, NW Neunkirchen 2322 hrs; Oblt Josef Kraft, 7./NJG 6, DM4/14 Ost, 2340 hrs; Oblt Helmuth Schulte, 7./NJG 6, Pardubice 2359 hrs)
20 Aug 44	Wellington	2359 hrs	14 Ost N/OK	LP505 150 Sqn (Flt Sgt E B Davies-+)	Target St Valentin; crashed near Steyr
				LP514 150 Sqn (Sgt J E Richardson-+	Target St Valentin; crashed near Ljubljana
				MF350 104 Sqn (Flt Sgt H J Potter-+)	Crashed near Oed-Öhling
				LP245 142 Sqn (Lt K A Kelly-+)	Crashed near Steyr (Also claims also by Oblt Josef Kraft, 7./NJG 6, ENE Steyr, 2310 hrs & 2318 hrs; Ofw Heinrich Säwert, 7./NJG 6, 40 km NE Steyr 2320 hrs)

Last flight with Do 217 25 Aug 44

APPENDIX NINE

Claims by Hptm Rudolf Schoenert (pilot) and Fw Johannes Richter (radio operator) while flying the Do 217 in the East

Stab I./NJG 100 (formed from IV./NJG 5 1 August 1943)

16 Aug 43	C9+EC	2208 hrs TB-7	SW.Shisdra
16 Aug 43	C9+EC	2336 hrs R-5	10 km NW.Nechotschi
16 Aug 43	C9+EC	2356 hrs R-5	8 km SE.Nechotski
27 Aug 43	C9+EC	2020 hrs TB-7	Krotowka
31 Aug 43	C9+EC	2101 hrs B-25	W Wysokoje
31 Aug 43	C9+EC	2221 hrs B-25	W Waskowo
31 Aug 43	C9+EC	2237 hrs B-25	W Waskowo
31 Aug 43	C9+EC	2300 hrs B-25	NW Smimowitschi
3 Sep 43	C9+EC	2234 hrs R-5	Artem, 40 km NE Poltawa
6 Sep 43	C9+AE	2103 hrs R-5	8 km NE Dretun
7 Sep 43	C9+AE	2058 hrs II-4	7 km S.Schutilino
7 Sep 43	C9+AE	2148 hrs II-4	PIQ 0662/35 Ost (Punitsche)
7 Sep 43	C9+AE	2217 hrs Li-2	12 km N.Staroje-Selo
7 Sep 43	C9+AE	2229 hrs Li-2	NW Loswida
20 Sep 43	C9+CE	2327 hrs II-4	N.Kialjaki
20 Sep 43	C9+CE	2357 hrs II-4	20 km E.Surash
10 Oct 43	C9+CE	2241 hrs U-2	NE.Dubrowno
11 Oct 43	C9+CE	2054 hrs Li-2	10 km N.Chartowa
11 Oct 43	C9+CE	2100 hrs Li-2	5 km SW Sapolje
11 Oct 43	C9+CE	2137 hrs Li-2	8 km NE Schklow [Two claims 12-13 Oct 43 and three on 13-14 Oct 43 flying Ju 88 C9+BE]
14 Oct 43	C9+CE	1821 hrs II-4	W.Dementino
14 Oct 43	C9+CE	1826 hrs II-4	W.Dementino
14 Oct 43	C9+CE	1837 hrs II-4	W.Dementino
14 Oct 43	C9+CE	2056 hrs II-4	E Narawoki
15 Oct 43	C9+CE	2017 hrs Li-2	Martschenki

APPENDIX TEN

Fixed Rearwards-Firing Guns fitted to the Do 217 ('Giesskanne')

Several specimens of the long wingspan Do 217, sub-series K, recently examined in Italy were fitted with fixed rearward-firing rifle calibre machine guns mounted in the tail cone.

This armament consists of two pairs of MG 81s i.e., four guns in all mounted side by side with a pair of muzzles protruding from each side of the tail cone.

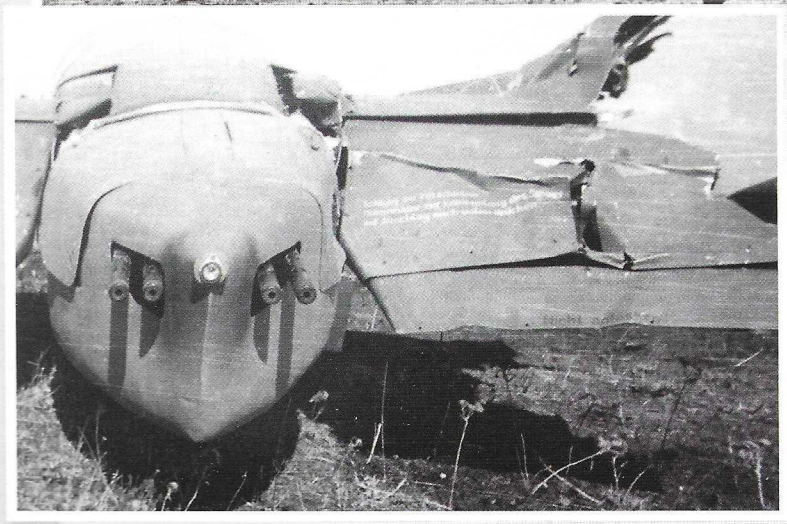
The guns appear to be mounted in parallel, but there may be very slight convergence.

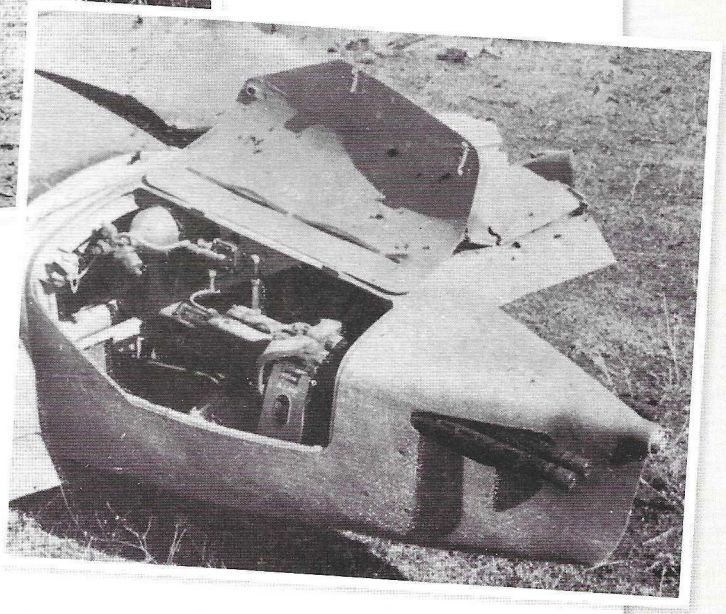
An air bottle which is mounted aboive and to the rear of the guns is provided for cocking and the weapons are fired electrically by a press button in the pilot's control column. It is estimated that 200 rounds of ammunition are carried for each gun giving it a total of 600 rounds per container. The whole unit with ammunition is self-contained in the tail cone and can, if necessary, be jettisoned by the pilot.

A periscope is used for sighting which is an entirely new departure for the GAF. It is 26 inches long of which 10 inches project above the cockpit roof and is fitted just forward and to the right of the pilot's head. The image is presented inverted thus if the target is above the line of flight it appears below the centre of the graticule. If to port its appears on the right side of the graticule. This facilitates aiming as the pilot has only to move his controls in the direction of the image.

A.I.2(g)
15.11.43

The remains of this Do 217 K-2, W.Nr. 4560, of III./KG 100 were discovered at Foggia in Italy after the Germans had retreated. It gave an insight into the periscope and the 'Giesskanne' gun mounting in the tail.





The armament consists of two pairs of MG 81s i.e., four guns in all mounted side by side with a pair of muzzles protruding from each side of the tail cone.

BOMBER GLOSSARY AND ABBREVIATIONS

AA	Anti-aircraft
Adj	Adjutant
AI	Airborne Interception
Aufklärungsgruppe	Reconnaissance Wing
Bordfunker (BF)	Radio Operator
Beobachter (BO or B)	Observer
Bordmechaniker (BM)	Flight Engineer
Bordschütze (BS)	Air Gunner
Deutsches Kreuz in Gold (DKiG)	German Cross in Gold
Do	Dornier
E/A	Enemy aircraft
Ehrenpokal (Pokal)	Goblet of Honour – awarded for outstanding achievements in the air war
Eisernes Kreuz (EK)	Iron Cross (awarded in First or Second Class)
Ergänzungs (Erg)	Training
Erprobungs	Testing and development
Feindflug	Operational flight
Feldwebel (Fw)	Flight Sergeant
Fern	Long-range
Flak	Anti-aircraft
Flieger (Flg)	Aircraftman
Fliegerführer Atlantik	Air Commander for the Atlantic region
Flugzeugführer (F)	Pilot
Frontflugspange	Mission Clasp – awarded for different numbers of operational flights, coming in bronze, silver and gold
Führer	Leader
GCI	Ground-Controlled Interception
Gefreiter (Gefr)	Leading Aircraftman
Generalfeldmarschall	Air Chief Marshal
Geschwader (Gesch)	Group consisting three Gruppen commanded by a Geschwader Kommodore (Gesch Komm)
Giesskanne	Watering can – nickname for the tail-mounted twin MG 81Z
Grossangriff	Massed attack
Gruppe (Gr)	Wing consisting three Staffeln; commanded by a Gruppenkommandeur (Gr Kdr). Gruppe number denoted by Roman numerals
Hauptmann (Hptm)	Flight Lieutenant/Captain
He	Heinkel
Ia	Operations Officer
IAS	Indicated Air Speed
IB	Incendiary bomb
Jagdgeschwader (JG)	Fighter Group
Ju	Junkers
Kampfgeschwader (KG)	Bomber Group
Kampfgeschwader zur besonderen Verwendung (KGzbV)	Normal designation for a special duties unit besonderen Verwendung
Kette	Three-aircraft tactical formation similar to RAF vic
Kommando (Kdo)	Detachment
Küstenfliegergruppe	Coastal Gruppe
Kriegsmarine	German Navy
Lehrgeschwader (LG)	Technical Development Flying Group
Leutnant (Lt)	Pilot Officer/2nd Lt
Luftflotte	Air Fleet
Luft Dienst (LD)	Communications and delivery unit
Luftmine	Air-dropped mine
Lux	Air-dropped flame float which was ignited by chemical reaction between calcium phosphide and sea water
Major (Maj)	Squadron Leader
Me	Messerschmitt (used by RAF)
Nachtaufklärung	Night reconnaissance
Nachtjäger (NJ)	Night fighter
Nachrichtenoffizier (NO)	Communications officer
Nav/Rad	Navigator/Radar Operator (RAF)
Oberfeldwebel (Ofw)	Warrant Officer
Obergefreiter (Ogefr)	Senior Aircraftman/Cpl
Oberleutnant (Oblt)	Flying Officer/1st Lt
Oberst	Group Captain/Colonel
Oberstleutnant (Obstlt)	Wing Commander/Lt Col
Pirateneinsatz	Pirate attacks (single aircraft normally low level in daylight)
Reichsluftfahrtministerium	Germany Air Ministry (RLM)
Reichsmarschall	Marshal of the Air Force
Ritterkreuz (RK)	Knight's Cross
Ritterkreuz mit Eichenlaub	Knight's Cross with Oakleaves (EL)
Rottenflieger	Wingman
SC	Sprengbombe Cylindrisch – thin-cased high-explosive bomb
SD	Sprengbombe Dickwandig – thick-walled fragmentation bomb
Sonderführer (Sd Fhr)	Rank usually given to War Reporters
Sonderstaffel	Special Staffel
Stab	Staff or HQ; formation in which Gr Kdr and Gesch Komm flew
Stabsfeldwebel (Stfw)	Senior Warrant Officer
Staffel (St)	Squadron (12 aircraft); commanded by a Staffel Kapitän (St Kap). Staffel number denoted by Arabic numerals
Störangriffe	Nuisance attack. Sometimes called a Pirate attack
Technischer Offizier (TO)	Technical Officer
Trialen	German explosive similar to British torpex
Unteroffizier (Uffz)	Sergeant
Wettererkundungsstaffel	Weather reconnaissance Staffel (Wekusta)
Werk Nummer (W.Nr.)	Serial Number
WO	Warrant Officer
Zerstörer (Z)	Destroyer/Heavy fighter
Zerstörerangriff	Precision attack against a specified target
Zerstörergeschwader (ZG)	Heavy Fighter Group

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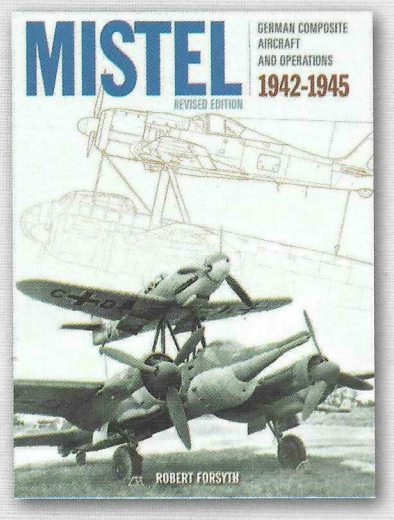

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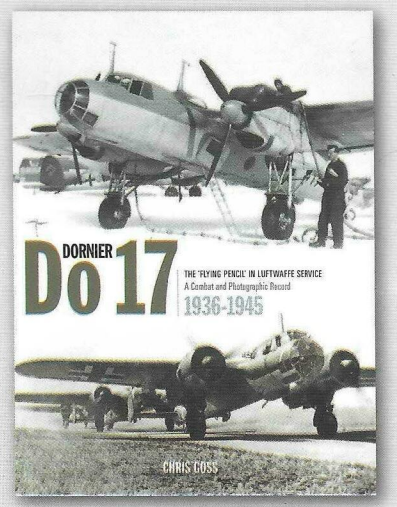

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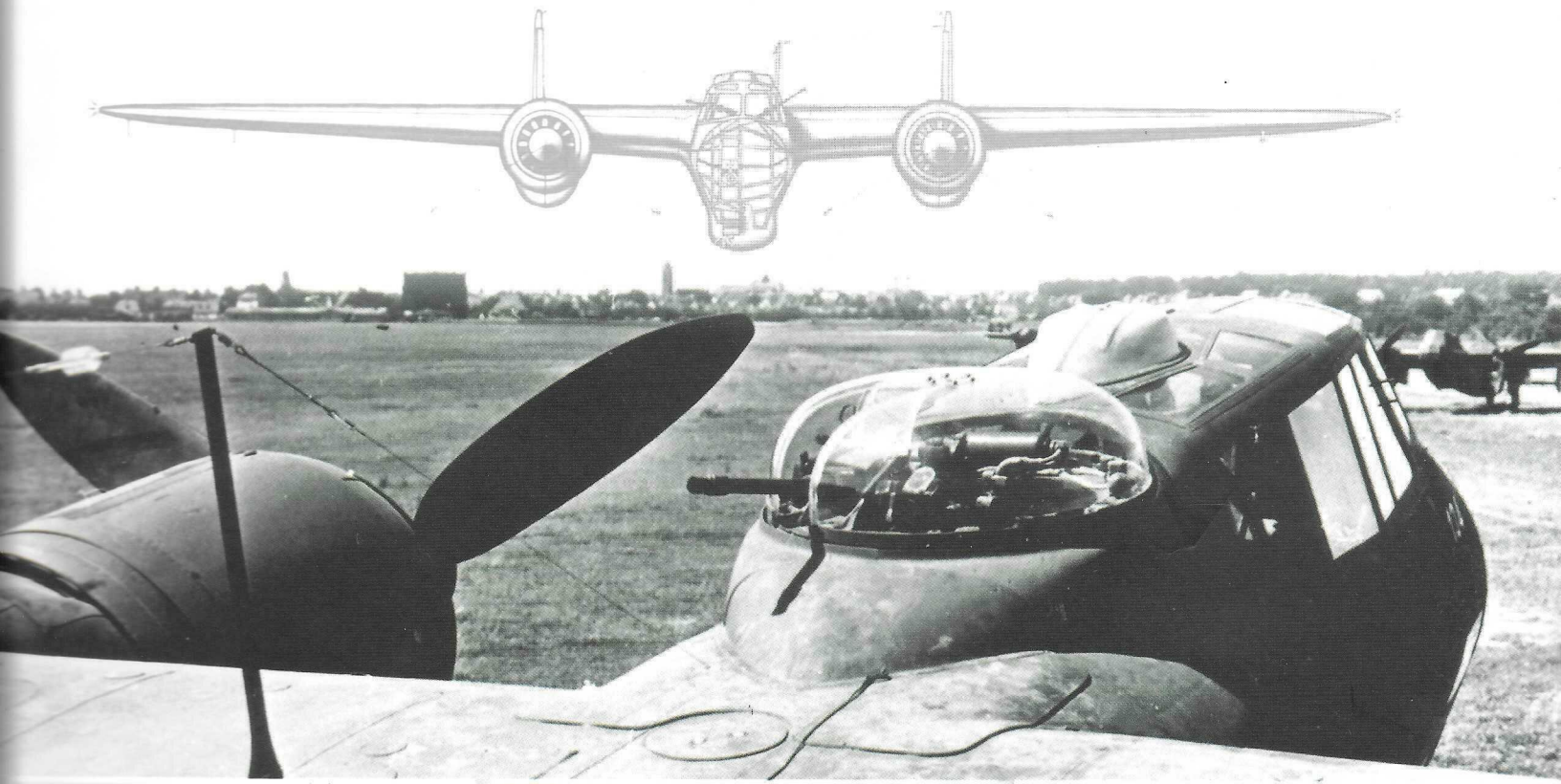

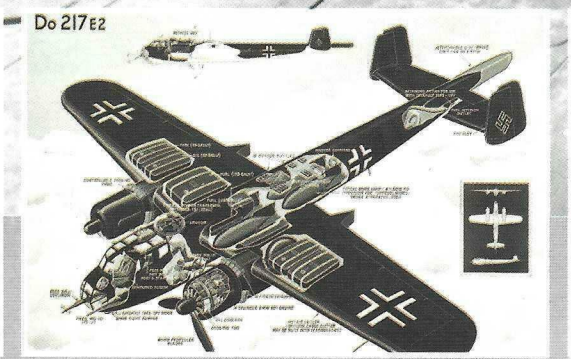

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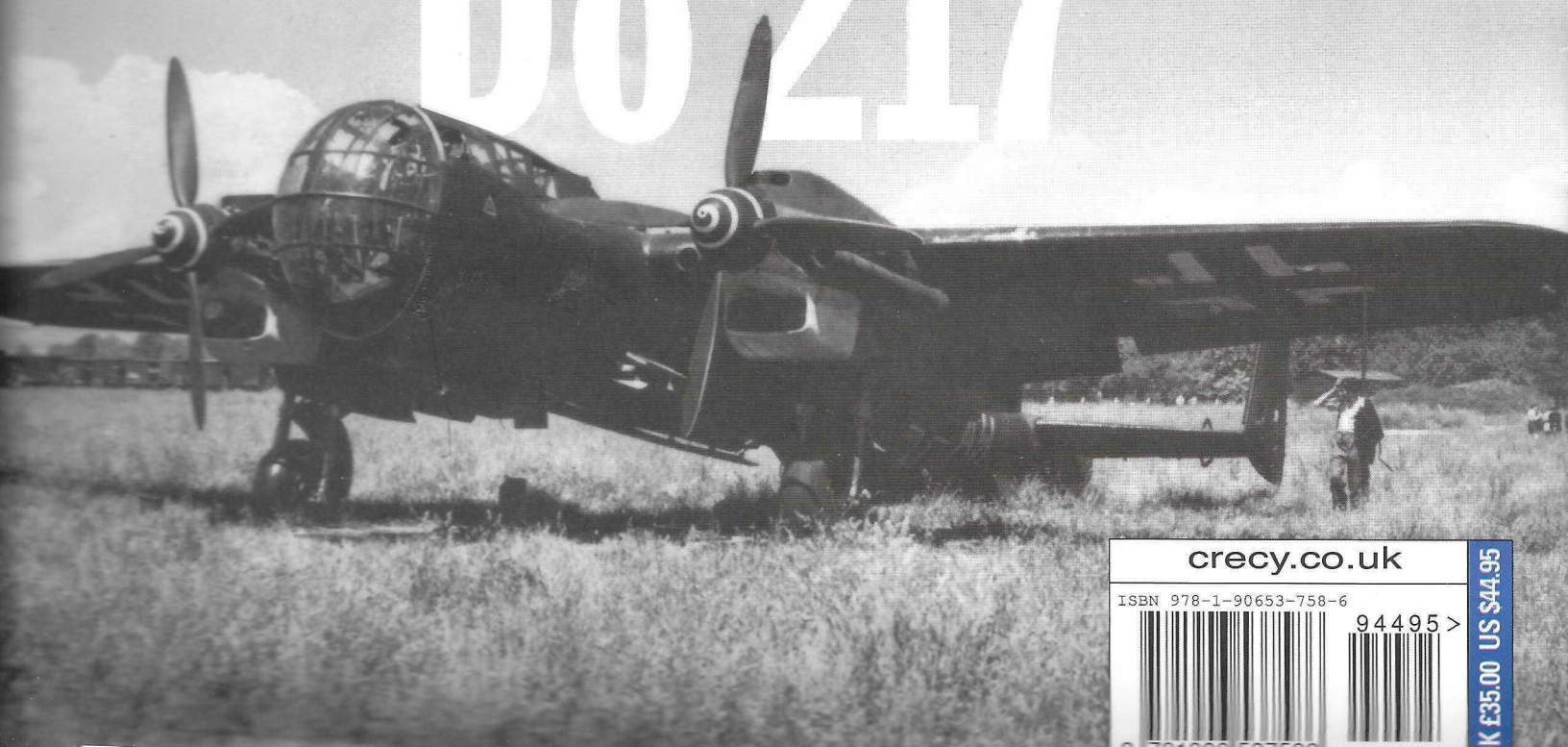

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